

HANS MORGENTHAU : INTELLECTUAL IN THE
POLITICAL SPHERE

Mitchell Rologas

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Hans Morgenthau: Intellectual in the Political Sphere



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(i) I, Mitchell Rologas, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 90,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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(ii) I was admitted as a research student in September, 1995 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in International Relations in September, 1995; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 1995 and 2001.

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Abstract

This is an intellectual biography of Hans Morgenthau. Morgenthau was a German Jew who, in fleeing Nazi Germany, emigrated to the United States in the mid-1930s. He subsequently came to have an important impact upon the nascent discipline of International Relations in the United States in the immediate post-war period. His book *Politics Among Nations* was the first major textbook to be used in International Relations within American universities and through a number of editions it came to sell something like half a million copies. Morgenthau was also active as a public commentator on international politics and, in particular, American foreign policy and he became a prominent opponent of the Vietnam War in the 1960s and early 1970s. The central claim of this thesis is that Morgenthau's intellectual contributions and political activities can only be properly understood when set in the broader intellectual and political contexts both of Germany where he was educated and the United States where he spent the second half of his life.

Table of Contents

<u>Introduction</u>	1-16
<u>Chapter One:</u> The Failure of German Liberalism and The Crisis of Modernity	17-75
<u>Chapter Two:</u> The American Science of Politics	76-149
<u>Chapter Three:</u> Intellectual in the Political Sphere	150-204
<u>Chapter Four:</u> Vietnam and The Purpose of American Politics	205-259
<u>Appendix:</u> A Note on the Sociology of the Intellectual	260-264
Bibliography	265-288

Introduction

"The trouble with Morgenthau", says one capital critic, "is that he is so totally predictable. He is a doctrinaire liberal with a rather hard-nose attitude which doesn't fool anybody. He is a surface cynic, [sic] nine times out of ten you'll find a frustrated idealist. That's Hans Morgenthau, a frustrated idealist who was shocked by a glimpse of the real world." (Newsweek Report, January 14, 1963)

"Do I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself. I am rich. I contain multitudes." (Walt Whitman)

The past fifty years has witnessed a massive global expansion of higher education that, in addition to the traditional areas of enquiry in the humanities and social sciences, has brought new subjects to the fore. One of the most prominent of relatively recent entrants has been the discipline of International Relations.¹ The first chair was established at the University of Aberystwyth in 1919 but it was not until the end of the Second World War that International Relations began to expand dramatically as a subject formally separate from politics, history and law. It is now a ubiquitous feature of the intellectual profiles of universities throughout the anglophone world and, increasingly, around the globe.

Initially, of course, those connected with the new subject were mostly interested in pursuing the immediate problems of international politics and asking whether theoretical and philosophical perspectives could be brought to the problems of war and peace. Was humanity weighted with the burden of an anthropological disposition towards violence? Was war, instead, the

¹ When capitalised 'International Relations' or 'International Politics' refers to the discipline itself rather than the object of enquiry.

inevitable by-product of an 'anarchical' system of states with 'no common power' to establish and enforce a rule of law? Could different institutional arrangements, in the form of the United Nations or otherwise, mitigate the seemingly ubiquitous manifestation of war? Would sociological changes brought about by the global spread of capitalism and free markets make a difference?

It has only been in comparatively recent times that thought has turned to the history of this young subject itself, and of its earliest representatives in the form of men like EH Carr and Hans Morgenthau. One response to International Relations had been to emphasise that, while the discipline may be relatively young in an institutional sense, there is nothing new at all about its subject matter. The problems of war and peace, of political violence, of political economy, are age-old and perennial. There is, correspondingly, an immense literature stretching back thousands of years which grapples with essentially the same dilemmas - from Thucydides and Augustine through Hobbes and Machiavelli to the twentieth century. As Robert Gilpin once put it, "everything - well, almost everything - that the new realists find intriguing in the interaction of international economics and politics can be found in the History of the Peloponnesian War."²

This sort of position can also be found more broadly in political science and intellectual history. In his *History of Political Science from Plato to the Present*, Robert Murray asserted that there was not "a single controversy of our day without a pedigree stretching into the distant ages."³ It followed, then, that the ideas of the great political thinkers had a topicality and a resonance which was universal. If Robert Jervis had thought that he was first to address the problem of the 'security dilemma', or had Hans Morgenthau

² Robert Gilpin, 'The richness of the tradition of political realism', *International Organisation*, Vol.38, No.2, Spring 1984, p.293.

³ Murray quoted in James Farr, 'The History of Political Science', *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol.32, No.4, November 1988, p.175.

imagined that there was something novel in his explorations of the balance-of-power, they would both have been mistaken: Thucydides had witnessed both phenomena and reported so in his *History of the Peloponnesian Wars*. Students of politics and history could, therefore, prosper from the study of the 'canon' of great texts from 'Plato to Nato', whether or not they were familiar with the contexts these great works were drawn from. One need not know anything of the rivalry between Sparta and Athens in order to grasp that Thucydides was reporting upon universal dilemmas. A knowledge of the history of the Italian city-states and of the rhetoric of renaissance humanism was not required in order to be able to appreciate Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* was, manifestly, concerned with the age-old problem of political order: one needed to know little of the English Civil War, or of the linguistic and religious conventions of Hobbes' time in order to be able to understand it.

During the 1970s, however, this universalist methodology was challenged by what has been called "a neo-contextualist and neo-historicist approach" to the history of ideas, which was employed by historians like JGA Pocock and Quentin Skinner.⁴ Their main point was that the text was never a self-sufficient resource. In order to be able to reach a proper understanding of a text two things were required, firstly a general investigation of the prevailing social, economic, and political conditions and, secondly, an awareness of the specific linguistic context in which a book was being written.⁵

Skinner has pointed to some of the problems inherent in an approach to the history of ideas based on the autonomy of the text. One danger is that on the basis of tenuous or even chance similarities authors are linked to a

⁴ John G. Gunnell, 'The Historiography of American Political Science', in David Easton, John Gunnell and Luigi Graziano (eds.), *The Development of Political Science: A Comparative Survey* (Routledge, London, 1991).

⁵ John Patrick Diggins, 'The Oyster and the Pearl': The Problem of Contextualism in Intellectual History', *History and Theory*, Vol. XXIII, 1984, pp.151-154.

subject in an absurdly anachronistic fashion.⁶ Examples of historical malapropisms are legion. Adam Smith, with invisible hand intact but theory of moral sentiments detached, becomes a card-carrying Thatcherite.⁷ Montesquieu is lauded for allegedly "anticipating the ideas of full employment and the Welfare State." At the hands of Karl Popper, Plato's views in *The Republic* are equated with those of "a totalitarian party politician."⁸ From here it is but a short step to the apportionment of 'blame': Nietzsche (or Wagner) for Hitler; Marx for Stalin or even, less dramatically, Machiavelli for Morgenthau.

A study unattuned to context may also miss important linguistic subtleties. Just to take one example - Benjamin Franklin's use of the word 'empire' in the late 18th century at a time when it referred to little more than a given area of land; it was not until the late nineteenth century that it came to acquire its contemporary meaning. Reading the nineteenth century meaning back to Franklin's time has been a source of historical misunderstanding. We may also tend to underestimate how different an idea can appear when placed in its original historical setting. Charles Taylor provides an amusing example of this:

"One has an ironic sense of how things have changed, when one reads Descartes advising his readers to ponder the meditations seriously, and even to spend a month thinking about the first one, so difficult did it seem to him to break the previous mind-set and grasp the dualist truth. Today, philosophers of my persuasion spend years trying to get students (and decades trying to get colleagues) to see that there is an alternative. Cartesian dualism is immediately understandable to undergraduates on day one."⁹

⁶ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas', in J. Tully (ed.), *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and his critics* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988) p.32.

⁷ Paul Ormerod, *The Death of Economics* (Faber and Faber, London, 1994) p.12.

⁸ Popper quoted in Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding', p.44.

⁹ Charles Taylor, 'Philosophy and its History', in Richard Rorty, JB Schneewind and Quentin Skinner (eds), *Philosophy in History* (Cambridge University Press, 1984) p.21.

A third problem identified by Skinner is what he refers to as 'the mythology of coherence'.¹⁰ Where interpreters give themselves the task of situating a particular author within a 'canon' of literature there is a strong built-in temptation to side-step important contradictions and inconsistencies which would otherwise make the subject's taxonomy more problematic. A substantial portion of an author's work may simply be set aside as 'unreflective' or 'polemical'. At worst a thinker may become so thoroughly de-contextualised as to become little more than "ventriloquist's dummies" at the hands of their controllers.¹¹ The 'myth of coherence' will also tend to obscure, in a deeply counter-intuitive way, the simple fact that thinkers will probably change their positions over time. We need only think of our own lives and how our ideas have changed in order to appreciate that this must often be so with those we study. Why should it be the case that only the greatest thinkers were also monomaniacs?

This neo-historicism is not, of course, without problems itself. The most obvious of these is that it may lead us to a deep scepticism about the possibility of any kind of historical enquiry concerned with recapturing the 'real' essence of a thinker or period. Following Collingwood and Gadamer all historical explication is necessarily refracted through minds which cannot be freed from contemporary influences and patterns of thought. "True historical thinking", according to Gadamer, "must take account of its own historicity."¹² This is, undoubtedly, a serious epistemological question which could be given a thesis length treatment on its own. In effect, though, Skinner and Gadamer are agreed in so far as they are aware that there is,

¹⁰ Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding', p.38.

¹¹ This phrase comes from Michael Donelan quoted in Ken Booth, 'Dare not to Know: IR Theory Vs the Future', in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), *International Relations Theory Today* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995) p.333.

¹² Gadamer quoted in John G. Gunnell, *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation* (Winthrop Publishers, Cambridge, Mass, 1979) p.112.

indeed, a problem to be reckoned with: an awareness that has been sadly absent until comparatively recent times in International Relations.

In Skinnerian terms a lack of contextual sensitivity has been an all too familiar feature of the literature of International Relations. A 'canon' of political realism will be constructed by, say, linking Thucydides (two pages of *The Peloponnesian Wars*); Machiavelli (the notorious sections from *The Prince*); Hobbes (a chapter from *Leviathan*); and so on to EH Carr and Morgenthau, with perhaps a sprinkling of Augustine and Weber's definition of the state for more sophisticated types. I should stress that I do not wish to suggest that, for example, a Renaissance humanist like Machiavelli cannot 'speak' to a political realist of the nuclear age. I accept the possibility of creating what Richard Rorty referred to as "rational bridgeheads" which permit "conversation" across "chasms".¹³ Nor am I necessarily rejecting the existence of perennial 'questions' even if the 'answers' to such questions are attempted in radically different contexts. However, it does seem to me that to construct a realist 'canon' which stretches across vast spatio-temporal distance must at least raise important intellectual problems which are often not even considered let alone engaged with.¹⁴

This lack of contextual sensitivity has hindered our efforts to reach a proper understanding of many of the discipline's most important thinkers. The desire to situate a writer within a broader 'canon', and more specifically within a contemporary 'school' of thought, so that he or she can be paired off against the representatives of other 'schools' (paradigms) has often led to writers being reduced to mere caricatures, the flimsiest of straw-men, and Hans Morgenthau has been as badly treated as anyone in this respect.

¹³ Richard Rorty, 'Introduction', *Philosophy in History*, p.5.

¹⁴ For an exploration of the problems raised by the discipline's historical treatment of Thucydides see James Der Derian, 'A Reinterpretation of Realism: Genealogy, Semiology, Dromology', in Frances A. Beer and Robert Hariman (eds), *Post-Realism: the rhetorical turn in international relations* (Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 1996). For an alternative reading of Machiavelli see Rob Walker, *Inside/Outside: international relations as political theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) pp.34-49.

Morgenthau will, of course, be familiar to almost anyone with even a passing acquaintance with the history of International Relations since World War Two. An emigre Jew who came to the United States in the late 1930s, Morgenthau went on to lecture in international politics at the University of Chicago. His *Politics Among Nations* was one of the subject's first textbooks and it went on to sell something like half a million copies through its various editions. Few reading lists in International Relations courses in the anglophone world, at least until, say, the mid-1970s would have failed to mention *Politics Among Nations*. In recent decades, however, his reputation has been much diminished, particularly in certain fashionable circles where he has come to be treated as little more than a figure to be mocked. He is often used as a straw-man to be swept aside by those with their own, sometimes eccentric, agendas.¹⁵

This development has, I think, been grossly short-sighted. For one thing, and this is not widely appreciated in International Relations, Morgenthau's was a life of extraordinary richness. As a young Jew in pre and post World War One Germany he felt the impact of anti-Semitism first hand and observed, with dismay, Hitler's rise to power. Intellectually, he participated in the pre-World War Two discussion surrounding the efficacy of international law and the League of Nations in addition to absorbing the works of writers of great importance in the twentieth century. He fled Germany in the early 1930s for Switzerland and then Spain only to find himself in the middle of the Spanish Civil War. He arrived in America at precisely the moment in which it had risen to the status of the pre-eminent global power and this enabled him to take part in the debates as to what the

¹⁵ For especially crude caricatures see Justin Rosenberg, *The Empire of Civil Society* (Verso, London, 1994) p.10; 'What's the Matter with realism?', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.16, 1990, pp.285-303; Martin Griffiths, *Realism, Idealism and International Politics* (Routledge, London, 1992); Hans-Karl Pichler, 'The godfathers of 'truth': Max Weber and Carl Schmitt in Morgenthau's theory of power politics', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.24, 1998, pp.185-200.

appropriate course for American foreign policy should be. Following Max Weber, he also brought with him to America the belief that it was the duty of the intellectual to participate in the political sphere, to speak 'truth to power'. In this capacity he was heavily involved in one of the gravest crises to affect the United States in the post-World War Two period, namely the calamitous intervention in Vietnam which he had opposed from the beginning. In short, he was connected in some way with many of the momentous events and the crises of his troubled century. We are in need of a full-length biographical treatment of this extraordinary life, but I hope for the moment that this what is, in effect, intellectual biography will at least provide some insights into a fascinating life.

There were, undeniably, deep-rooted intellectual problems which his many critics have been only too eager to draw our attention to. As we shall see, his many publications were riven with antinomies, intellectual cross-currents, and dialectics which failed to find their synthesis. In this, too, he was very much a man of his time - inspired by the works and imbued with the values of Immanuel Kant and of nineteenth century German idealism but forced to try and reconcile them with the harsh realities of the political life of the twentieth century. Far from being the crude advocate of power politics that many of his caricaturists would have us recognise, he was a man of deep ethical instincts and it was precisely his desire to illuminate a moral path for humanity - under the shadow of the Holocaust and the development of weapons with the capacity to extinguish life altogether - that gave rise to the pathos and the tensions and contradictions in his work.

My hope here is that a properly contextual study will at least enable us to reach a better understanding of Morgenthau. I should stress that my aim is not to explain away inconsistencies or to bury contradictions.¹⁶ Studies

¹⁶ As Charles Taylor has put it: "A satisfactory explanation must also make sense of the agents. This is not to say, of course, that it must show their action as making sense. For it very often does not. Frequently they are confused, malinformed, contradictory in their goals and

which bend an author to fit a particular thesis or to squeeze him or her into a suitably identified pigeon-hole are undoubtedly easier to write but they often leave us with mere shadows of their subjects, desiccated husks drained of their humanity. I can only hope that I have been able to capture at least an essence of the complexity of Morgenthau and of the richness of his life. I don't wish to imply, however, that nothing worthwhile has been written on Morgenthau to date. I should like to forego, if I may, the PhD candidates customarily defensive vilification of the existing works in his or her area of interest. Much of the secondary literature pertaining to Morgenthau is given a close scrutiny in the chapters proper and I don't intend to repeat the analysis here, but I would like, in passing, to draw the reader's attention to the best of what is currently available.

An essential starting point for anyone with an interest in Morgenthau is the collection of essays written to mark his death. Many of the contributors were drawn from the closest of Morgenthau's colleagues and former students and most of the problems that I explore in detail in this dissertation are noted there, however briefly.¹⁷ Stanley Hoffmann, too, understands the fundamental problems concerning Morgenthau though he's never written more than a few pages on the subject in any given context.¹⁸ Niels Amstrup's article on Morgenthau's early intellectual development was written as long as twenty years ago and nothing written subsequently has improved upon it.¹⁹ Jaap Nobel has written a good article which attempts to trace the twists and turns of Morgenthau's analysis of American foreign policy over the course of the

actions. But in identifying the contradictions, confusions etc *we* make sense of what they did. And that means that we come to see how as *agents* ie beings who act, have purposes, desires - they come to do what they did, and to bring about what befell." *Philosophy and the Human Sciences* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) pp.116-117.

¹⁷ Robert Myers and Kenneth Thompson (eds), *Truth and Tragedy* (Transaction Books, New York, 1984).

¹⁸ The bibliographical details of Hoffman's works can be found later in the dissertation.

¹⁹ Niels Amstrup, 'The 'Early Morgenthau': A Comment on the Intellectual Origins of Realism', *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.13, 1978, pp.163-175.

Cold War.²⁰ In terms of the general context, intellectual and otherwise, Michael Joseph Smith's *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (mercifully not Thucydides to Kissinger), and Joel Rosenthal's *Righteous Realists: political realism, responsible power, and American culture in the nuclear age* are both excellent.²¹ The concerns of Rosenthal, in particular, parallel many of those I explore here. Despite, or perhaps because, of not being addressed specifically to a treatment of political realism in International Relations, Rob Walker's contextually alive sections on the subject in his *Inside/Outside: international relations as political theory*, are the most illuminating to be found anywhere.²²

There is no shortage of general works dealing with political realism and international relations theory with insights to offer about Morgenthau, but there is a dearth of full-length works devoted to him specifically. Aside from the collection of essays mentioned earlier, the only English language book given over to Morgenthau entirely is Greg Russell's *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of Statecraft* which is too deeply flawed in conception to be generally recommendable.²³ In his introduction Russell refers to Morgenthau's "theory and philosophy of American realism."²⁴ He later suggests that the 'six principles of political realism' outlined in Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* specify the "content and boundaries of an American philosophy of power politics."²⁵ The second chapter is given the title 'Roots of an American thinker' (emphases added). This is absurdly parochial. For one thing if there is an authentically American brand of realism it is, surely, the neo-realism of Kenneth Waltz and his followers rather than Morgenthau's

²⁰ Jaap Nobel, 'Morgenthau's Struggle with Power: the theory of power politics and the Cold War', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.21, 1995, pp.61-85.

²¹ Michael Joseph Smith, *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1986); Joel Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists: political realism, responsible power, and American culture in the nuclear age* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1991).

²² Rob Walker, *Inside/Outside: international relations as political theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1993).

²³ Greg Russell, *Hans J. Morgenthau and the Ethics of American Statecraft* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1990).

²⁴ *ibid.* p.1.

²⁵ *ibid.* p.59.

version. Nor can Morgenthau be claimed for Team America in the way that Russell attempts to. He hardly seems to register the fact that Morgenthau was thirty-seven years old when he came to the United States, the bearer of a rich intellectual heritage and fully developed in his own right. Russell's chapter on 'The Continental Heritage' begins with Thucydides and works its way through the familiar rogues gallery of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Richelieu et al but at no point does Russell actually attempt to inform us, specifically, what the intellectual links might be with Morgenthau, and he has little to say about thinkers who *were* of direct relevance - Nietzsche, Schmitt, Mannheim, Weber.²⁶ Russell's is precisely the kind of flawed intellectual genealogy that neo-contextualists like Skinner have been drawing our attention to. Russell, correctly sensing Morgenthau's deep ethical instincts, wishes to separate him from what he sees as an amoral continental tradition of *raison d'état* but he wrongly assumes that Morgenthau must have found his ethics in the United States. They were, in fact, drawn from the heritage of German idealism and, in a somewhat different form, from the theory and practice of Max Weber. Russell's failure to appreciate this seriously compromises his study from the beginning.

Aside from Russell, an unusual recent take on Morgenthau has been provided by Al Murray.²⁷ Murray, too, wants to link Morgenthau with an intellectual 'canon' - but not the usual one of *realpolitik*. Murray instead suggests that Morgenthau is best viewed as part of a Judeo-Christian moral tradition as refracted through St Augustine and his twentieth century follower Reinhold Niebuhr. The attraction of Augustine for Morgenthau, Murray claims, lies in the former's attempt to reconcile a transcendental Christian morality with a 'realistic' acceptance of the conditions of temporal

²⁶ *ibid.* pp.10-55.

²⁷ Al Murray, 'The moral politics of Hans J. Morgenthau', *Review of Politics*, Vol.58, No.1, Winter 1996, pp.81-108; *Reconstructing Realism: A Reinterpretation, Rearticulation, and Reevaluation of the Theory of Political Realism* (Phd Dissertation, Department of Politics, University of Bristol, 1996).

life; in Augustine's case the collapse of the Roman Empire. Given that Christ's second coming may not be imminent, Christians have a duty to engage in temporal affairs rather than retreating to a position of stoic withdrawal and abandonment of the polis to the reprobate. The political sphere is, of course, corrupted by the lust for power, an arena in which fallen man's worst instincts are given the freest reign. Hence, morally pure acts are impossible. Christians must wrestle with the moral antinomy of The City of Man and The City of God "... and hope that their virtue will attain them forgiveness for their sins."²⁸

Murray points specifically to two features of the Augustinian framework common to Morgenthau; firstly a similar conception of the essence of human nature and, secondly, a similar dialectical understanding of the relationship between political necessity and moral transcendence and a concomitant commitment to political engagement in spite of the moral hazards of so doing.²⁹ This Judeo-Christian framework is then made operational through the introduction of Burkean and Weberian elements, in particular the consequentialism of Weber's 'Ethics of Responsibility'.³⁰ All of this leaves us with "a non-perfectionist Judeo-Christian ethics."³¹ Suitably re-equipped with this re-jigged intellectual genealogy we are now able to reach, as Murray immodestly puts it, " ... a global understanding of Morgenthau's project. Situating him within this Judeo-Christian context offers the final piece of the jigsaw which allows us to understand the whole picture."³²

In spite of a superficial plausibility the problem, once again, is that the author has misjudged the appropriate context for Morgenthau. In the introduction to his dissertation, Murray claims that he draws "heavily upon

²⁸ This is a summary of Murray's argument in 'The Moral Politics of Hans Morgenthau', pp.88-89.

²⁹ *ibid.* p.88.

³⁰ Murray, *Reconstructing Realism*, pp.150-160; 'Moral Politics', pp.99-100.

³¹ Murray, 'Moral Politics', p.105.

³² *ibid.* p.106.

the contextualist approach developed by Quentin Skinner" but he then goes on to do precisely what Skinner says should not be done, that is, to place an author in an intellectual 'canon' stretching across vast lengths of time.³³ The specific problem with situating Morgenthau in this Judeo-Christian context, and it does seem extraordinary that this needs to be pointed out, is that Morgenthau was not a theist!³⁴ The fundamental anchor, surely, of an Augustinian moral framework is a belief in god and the hereafter.³⁵ A god-less Augustinianism - a City of Man without a City of God - is surely something altogether different. If a City of Man is all there is its politics assume a gravity which moves them beyond any Judeo-Christian conception. And given the dangers posed by the combination of virulent nationalism in combination with the availability of weapons of unprecedented destructive capacity, the politics of the mid-twentieth century were very grave indeed.

A brief comparison with two authentic Christian realists will help to illuminate the point being made here. It has, for example, been said of Herbert Butterfield that "there was a sense in which Butterfield's transcendent loyalties made him unable ultimately to take politics too seriously."³⁶ Reinhold Niebuhr, at the end of a discussion of the threats of 'atomic annihilation' or 'universal tyranny' concluded that "if such a day should come we will remember than the mystery of God's sovereignty and mercy transcends the fate of empires and civilisations."³⁷ No similar passage is to be

³³ Murray, 'Reconstructing Realism', p.27.

³⁴ He also wrote on a number of occasions that Christian ethics were irreconcilable with successful political action. See, for example, 'The Demands of Prudence', *World View*, Vol.3, No.6, June 1960, p.6; 'The influence of Reinhold Niebuhr in American Political Life and Thought', in H.Landon (ed.), *Reinhold Niebuhr: a Prophetic Voice in Our Time* (Books for Libraries Press, New York, 1962).

³⁵ In truth, Murray is actually aware that the value of a conception of ethics based around Judeo-Christian theology must be highly questionable in a more secular age. (*Reconstructing Realism*, p.191.) Later in the dissertation, having painstakingly reconstructed his Augustinian framework he then backs away from it by inserting a Rortian-style pragmatics - a deeply unsatisfying sleight of hand.

³⁶ Alberto R. Coll, *The Wisdom Of Statecraft* (Duke University Press, Durham, 1985, p.11.

³⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Christian Realism and Political Problems* (Faber and Faber, London, 1953) pp.112-113.

found anywhere in Morgenthau's vast opus precisely because, faced with the possibility of nuclear annihilation, he cannot turn his face away from the City of Man. This is also why politics assumes a genuinely tragic dimension for Morgenthau in the way that it does not for Christian thinkers. As Niebuhr has put it, "... a purely tragic view of life is not finally viable, it is, at any rate, not the Christian view."³⁸ That Christianity is profoundly anti-tragic seems obvious enough to a non-believer like George Steiner too.³⁹ Like that of many others, Murray's portrait of Morgenthau is too neat and well-rounded, shorn of its pathos and modernist angst.

There is, then, a case to be made for a full-length treatment of Morgenthau which does not seek to evade the problems and contradictions that were the product of his rich and divided intellectual heritage and of a life spent in the political sphere. The first stage of a remapped intellectual genealogy for Morgenthau lies in a thorough exploration of the German context, historical and intellectual. The failure of German liberalism and the Romantic reaction against the Enlightenment is documented in chapter one. As we shall see, the suspicion of political liberalism became a feature of German intellectual life, extending to those émigrés who came to the United States, Hans Morgenthau among them. Morgenthau had also witnessed German intellectuals abasing themselves before the state power of Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany. He, instead, took with him to the United States the belief that the intellectual had an obligation to speak 'truth to power' in the political sphere rather than collaborating with it. His inspiration had been the example of Max Weber who had refused to pander to the most base elements of German nationalism. Weber was one of a number of German intellectuals who were of great importance in the shaping of Morgenthau's world-view, the others being Karl Mannheim, Friedrich Nietzsche and Carl

³⁸ Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1952) pp.156-157.

³⁹ George Steiner, *The Death of Tragedy* (Faber and Faber, London, 1961) p.331.

Schmitt. Together, they form a very modern intellectual genealogy which will help us to shed a great deal more light upon Morgenthau than the usual ahistorical 'canon' of realists.

In chapters two and three we see how the German intellectual ethos conveyed by Morgenthau translated in the very different context of the United States which was largely free of any sense that politics was a diabolical and often tragic undertaking, and where the Enlightenment's doctrine of progress had not been subjected to sustained challenge, intellectual or otherwise. In chapter two we deconstruct the early books with which Morgenthau established his intellectual reputation and see how they appear when set against the backdrop of the history of political science in the United States.

In chapter three we trace the evolution of Morgenthau's ideas over the course of the 1950s to the early 1960s. We also begin to examine Morgenthau's life beyond the academy as an 'intellectual in the political sphere' committed to taking part in the debates over the course of American foreign policy as the Cold War unfolded. We also examine some of the problems - practical and ethical - facing the intellectual in political life under the conditions of modernity.

Chapter four continues the narrative into the 1960s and focuses in the event that, more than any other, came to dominate his life in this decade - the Vietnam War. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the last decade of Morgenthau's life and how his ideas were influenced by the turbulent politics at home and abroad. We will also explore his complicated relationship with Henry Kissinger.

Given his importance to the history of International Relations and the limitations of some of the existing literature, this study shouldn't require any further justification. I hope that one of the strengths of what I am attempting here will be that my genuine interest in Morgenthau and his historical

contribution will help to illuminate him better than would be the case if I were merely using him in order to participate in one of the discipline's interminable 'debates' between 'schools'. Too many studies in intellectual history are compromised by manifestly half-hearted attempts to demonstrate a topical, instrumental usefulness for the work concerned. Whatever there may or may not be in Hans Morgenthau's work to help illuminate contemporary problems in world politics is a question for another occasion.

Chapter One: The Failure of German Liberalism and the Crisis of Modernity

"I never believed in liberalism" (Hannah Arendt).

"Everything Romantic stands in the service of other unromantic energies"(Carl Schmitt).

On the 17th of November 1918 an opening ceremony was held in Munich for the short-lived Bavarian Republic which emerged from the chaos following the disintegration of the Wilhelmine order. Bruno Walter, Mahler's protégé who was later to become part of the émigré community in the United States, conducted Beethoven's Leonore Overture No.3 and Kurt Eisner, intellectual and author and now both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the newly established government, made a speech linking the recent political developments with Beethoven's music:

"The World seems shattered, lost in the abyss. Suddenly in the midst of darkness and despair the sounds of trumpets ring out, proclaiming a new word, a new mankind, a new freedom. Thus did Beethoven see the destiny of the World ... the work of art we have just heard describes with prophetic foresight the reality we have just experienced."¹

Given this taste for romantic metaphysics it was, perhaps, predictable that Eisner and his fellow intellectuals who governed the *Räterepublik* saw no need to develop rhetorical strategies for the speeches and pamphlets they made for public consumption. Their language has been described elsewhere as "abstract, mystical moralising."² Such men had little with which to oppose the

¹Eisner in Stephen Lamb, 'Intellectuals and the Challenge of Power', in *The Weimar Dilemma: Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic*, A. Phelan (ed.), (Manchester University Press, 1985) p.140.

²Lamb, 'Intellectuals', p.158.

pragmatic brutality of right-wing violence which was dedicated to establishing a grip upon power rather than promoting 'Geist' and 'Gemeinschaft' amongst the masses. Less than a hundred days after his accession to power Eisner was murdered by a Bavarian nobleman. Astonishingly, at Eisner's funeral Heinrich Mann felt that he could provide consolation with the suggestion that "the hundred days of Eisner's government have provided more pleasurable exercises of Man's rational faculties, more rejuvenation of the spirit than the previous fifty years."³(!!)

The assassination of Eisner unleashed a further wave of anarchy in Munich and, in the political vacuum that followed a short-lived attempt to form a government under the majority socialist Johannes Hoffman, an even unlikelier group of intellectuals claimed authority. This motley crew included the anarchist philosopher Gustav Landauer; Ernst Töller, one of Germany's leading exponents of Expressionist drama; the poet Erich Mühsam who immediately offered up some verse entitled '*Der Lampenbutzer*' in mockery of left-wing rivals; and one Dr Franz Lipp who has attained a measure of political immortality by virtue of his first act as Foreign Minister, namely the sending of a telegram to 'Comrade Pope, Peter's Cathedral, Rome', in which former Prime Minister Hoffman was accused of having stolen the key to Lipp's toilet. Lipp was also kind enough to provide his Holiness with some quotations from Kant's *Perpetual Peace*.⁴ This is, surely, much closer to the revolutionary praxis of Marx, Groucho than Marx, Karl. This exquisite theatre would be all the more enjoyable if one were not aware of the consequences for German democracy. The inability of German intellectuals to provide any sort of worthwhile leadership for the German left and centre was

³ Mann in *ibid.* p.139.

⁴ Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (Oxford University Press, 1987), pp.410-411. See also Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History 1918-1933* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, London, 1978) pp.41-78.

yet another factor working to undermine the Weimar Republic.⁵ These interventions in political life, however ineffectual, were themselves rare on the part of German intellectuals for whom a complete disdain for the perceived vulgarities of politics was the more usual position.

No-one better illustrates this stance than Thomas Mann in his famous clash with his brother Heinrich during the First World War. Heinrich Mann had responded to a couple of chauvinistic essays written by his brother with an essay of his own on Emile Zola and the Dreyfus Affair. For Heinrich, Zola was a 'democratic leader' and the model of an activist intellectual for whom literature and politics were indivisible.⁶ Heinrich saw himself as the German equivalent of Zola in challenging the Wilhelmine regime just as Zola had led the attack against the French establishment over Dreyfus.⁷ Heinrich had, for some time, been critical of the passivity of German intellectuals whom he felt to have acquiesced in the rule of "God's grace and the fist."⁸ Thomas correctly recognised that Heinrich had included him as a member of those "false intellectuals", the "entertaining parasites" who stood "in elegant array against truth and justice."⁹ Thomas Mann's reply was contained in his *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*. This is, in part, a piece of the crudest invective and the most transparently chauvinistic propaganda but at another level it does capture very well the *Zeitgeist* of the intellectual in Germany.

Mann claimed that the war represented a German defence of its national culture against the threatening materialist values of the Enlightenment.¹⁰ As in his earlier essays Mann juxtaposed the 'culture' (*Kultur*) of Germany - musical, metaphysical, pedagogical and subjective - against the

⁵ I don't wish to overstate the importance of this point. As Laquer has pointed out, there was also a much broader failing on the part of the centre left to match the dynamism of the Nazis.

⁶ See Donald Prater, *Thomas Mann: A Life* (Oxford University Press, 1995) p.102.

⁷ Walter D. Morris (trans.), 'Introduction', to Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (Frederick Ungar Publishing, New York, 1986) p.VIII.

⁸ Ronald Hayman, *Thomas Mann*, (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1996) pp.287-288.

⁹ Morris, 'Introduction', p.VIII

¹⁰ Mann, *Reflections*, p.82.

mere 'civilisation' of the West - analytical, sceptical, and deeply political.¹¹ Politics, for Mann, was synonymous with the grubby wheeling and dealing of democracy of which he wants no part for a Germany whose inhabitants "will never be able to love political democracy because they cannot love politics itself... ." The authoritarian state, Mann suggests, "...remains the one that is proper and becoming to the German people, and the one they basically want."¹² Heinrich's advocacy of political engagement for the intellectual was anathema to Thomas for whom politics and intellect were fundamentally antithetical.¹³ Heinrich, "civilisation's literary man" in Thomas's condescending description, looked to politics because he has never been able to enjoy "the high ecstasy of German metaphysics."¹⁴ The state was also considered to be an important component of this German metaphysics and hence not part of the political sphere. This deeply conservative, quietistic view of political life had important consequences for German political life as I've already suggested. As we shall see later, in reacting against this historical tragedy Hans Morgenthau took with him to the United States the very different perspective that the intellectual had a duty to engage with the political sphere.

Thomas Mann himself came eventually to distrust 'the high ecstasy of German metaphysics' and in 1930, shortly after Hitler's first important electoral breakthrough, his essay *Appeal to Reason* warned against "the ideas of a romanticising philosophy." National Socialism, with the support of "the academic professional class" was haranguing Germans "... in an idiom of mystical philistinism ... which give the movement an ingredient of cultured barbarism more dangerous and more remote from reality ... than the ... political romanticism that led us into the war."¹⁵ This belated conversion to reason was, in many ways, too little and too late. Most German intellectuals

¹¹ Morris, 'Introduction', p.VII; Mann, *Reflections* p.17.

¹² Mann, *Reflections*, pp.16-17.

¹³ See *ibid.* pp17, 152, 234-235.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p.408.

¹⁵ Mann in Gordon A. Craig, *The Germans* (G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1982) p.209.

were by this time entirely antipathetic to the democratic politics of Weimar and were instead devoted to the worship of the state which was seen to exist metaphysically above the sordid realities of democracy.

The Failure of German Liberalism

The story of how such a state of affairs came to pass is inevitably bound up with the broader questions of German political evolution, in particular the failure of the 'Enlightenment Project' in Germany and of German liberalism. Historical sociologists like Barrington Moore and Alexander Gerschenkron have pointed to the fact that 'late' industrialisation has tended to be associated with more corporate forms of socio-economic organisation and more authoritarian forms of government.¹⁶ And where the bourgeoisie failed to make a thoroughgoing breakthrough the continuing authority of the landed classes, in Germany the notoriously reactionary Prussian Junkers, served to frustrate democratic development and stymie the growth and activity of the intelligentsia.

Turning from political sociology to a more straight forward geopolitical perspective leads to similar observations. In the often brutal maelstrom of Central Europe states were forced to swim or sink. Some states, like Prussia, were able to successfully re-organise to respond to the imperative of survival. Others, like Poland, were not and suffered the tragic consequences of which we are only too aware. We need not agree with Francis Fukuyama (and Hegel) that the Prussian defeat by the French at the battle of Jena in 1806 marked the 'End of History' in order to be able to recognise the stimulus it gave to the reorganisation and further expansion of the Prussian State.¹⁷ In most parts of Central Europe militarisation

¹⁶ See Barrington Moore Jr, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Allen Lane, 1967) & Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic backwardness in historical perspective* (Praeger, New York, 1962).

¹⁷ Francis Fukuyama, 'The end of history?', *The National Interest*, Vol. 18, 1989, pp. 3-18.

encouraged stronger and more centralised state structures at the expense of the growth of a liberal civil society.

Even so, it is true that we can find resistance to the 'Enlightenment' in Germany which predates the great political and socio-economic upheavals of the nineteenth century. The pre-eminent intellectual figure of this opposition was undoubtedly Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder was born on the 25th of August 1744 in the East Prussian town of Mohrungen, the son of a cantor/schoolmaster. Both birthplace and familial background mitigated against his intellectual development but good fortune led him to university where he studied under a young instructor by the name of Immanuel Kant who went on to become the most famous of the German *Aufklärer*. His most implacable opponent, openly so from 1785 on, was his former student Johann Herder.

When one reads Herder it becomes clear why he had such a profound impact upon subsequent generations of German intellectuals. His wide-ranging explorations across theology, philosophy, aesthetics and the natural sciences teem with the vitality of a scholar who was unusually alive to a universe of different colours and shades, to the sheer diversity of human experience.¹⁸ If we understand historicism to represent the assertion of the particular and the contingent against the universal and the teleological Herder was the first and, arguably, the greatest of the German historicists.¹⁹ His defence of the communal against the cosmopolitan became a permanent feature of the intellectual landscape of Germany, including a large part of the group of German émigrés who came to the United States in the 1930s and

¹⁸ Herder's complete works run to some thirty three volumes but a good selection is provided by F.M. Barnard, *J.G. Herder on Social and Political Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1969).

¹⁹ There is, of course, any number of different understandings of the term 'historicism'. Karl Popper, for example, links historicism with Marx, Hegel and historical telos. See his *The Poverty of Historicism* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1945).

1940s. He was, as Isaiah Berlin has pointed out, "the profoundest critic of the Enlightenment."²⁰

For Herder, as for Aristotle and many others, "man is by nature a gregarious creature, born to live in society..." indeed, "the human race has never been without government; it is as natural to it as its origin and as the grouping together of its members within families."²¹ The basis for this collective political identity is not the acceptance of a common sovereign power, nor is it defined by bloodlines or other genetic indicators but is rather established through a shared culture which called is marked predominantly by the use of a common language. For Herder, as for George Steiner, the collapse of the Tower of Babel has been a source of great richness rather than a curse.²²

It should already be apparent that Herder's *Weltanschauung* placed him at odds with many of his predecessors and contemporaries. Any sort of pre-social 'state of nature' or contractarian understanding of social relationships can be rejected out of hand:

"Man is not a Hobbesian Wolf, nor a lone creature of the forest, as Rousseau would have it, for he has a communal language in which to communicate."²³ Nor was Herder's outlook based upon a slavish devotion to the state.²⁴ He maintained a consistent opposition towards any kind of administrative centralisation and rejected any suggestion that the worth of nations could be linked to territorial aggrandisement. Barnard has accurately described the nature of Herder's political communities as anarcho-pluralistic rather than nationalistic.²⁵

²⁰ Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (The Hogarth Press, 1976) p.165.

²¹ J. Herder, 'The Origin of Language', p.161; 'Dissertation on the Reciprocal Influence of Government and the Sciences', p.229 in Barnard, *J.G. Herder*. See also pp.163,317-8,324.

²² See George Steiner, *Errata: An Examined Life* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1997) p.102.

²³ Barnard, *J.G. Herder*, p.167.

²⁴ On his rejection of the centralised, bureaucratic apparatus of the state see his 'Ideas for a Philosophy of History', in *ibid.* p.310.

²⁵ Barnard, *Herder*, p.7.

One of the most striking elements of Herder's treatment of these language-based communities is his resistance to a normative ranking of them. In his ironically titled *Yet Another Philosophy of History* (1774) he condemns the "arbitrary verdicts of praise and blame" which are attached to communities past and present. How, Herder asks, can we judge other nations and ages by our own understandings of virtue and happiness? Is "good not dispersed over the earth?" Has it not "...been distributed in a thousand forms, changing shape like an eternal Proteus throughout continents and centuries?"²⁶ Hence Herder's exasperation with the customary idolatry extended to the civilisations of Ancient Greece and Rome. Not only does this serve to cast a shadow over other worthy groups it is, in any case, an undertaking which is essentially pointless on anything other than strictly antiquarian grounds. We cannot capture the virtues of these past communities and somehow transfuse them into our own. Herder similarly questions the claims made by many of his colleagues. He rejects the simple bifurcation of the gothic darkness of the Middle Ages with the enlightened eighteenth century.²⁷ And he is highly attuned to the hypocrisies of the age: slavery may have been abolished in Europe but non-Christian and non-European peoples are 'devastated' and 'debauched' across three continents.²⁸ Europeans do not possess a monopoly of virtue. In short it was this thoroughgoing pluralism, this rejection of the historical *telos* and other simplistic universalisms of his *Aufklärer* contemporaries that set Herder apart from them.

It should be clear by now that there was little rational basis for Nazi efforts to transmogrify Herder into some sort of proto-fascist. His opposition

²⁶ J. Herder, 'Yet Another Philosophy of History', in *ibid.* p.187

²⁷ *ibid.* pp.192-194. "...in some respects we would willingly take their disorder and unpolished manners, in exchange for our light, and our unbelief, our enervated coldness and refinement, our philosophical exhaustion and human misery."

²⁸ *ibid.* p.219. In this respect at least Herder's rejection of any hierarchical racial division and simplistic dualisms like 'enlightened' and 'unenlightened' and 'cultured' and 'uncultured' made him rather more progressive than the allegedly cosmopolitan Kant, a disagreement that Herder would point to with great pleasure. See Robert T. Clark Jr., *Herder: His Life and Thought* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1955). pp.322-325.

to racism is clear and there is also some evidence to suggest that Herder admired the Jews for their ability to retain a sense of communal identity in spite of their scattered condition. Moreover, he saw 'the Jewish Problem' in political rather than religious or racial terms, amenable to what later came to be called 'the Zionist Solution'.²⁹ Nor is there any hint of anthropomorphism in Herder's notion of a '*volk*' which remains a collectivity of individuals, not the organic, biological entity it became in the hands of others.³⁰ Add to this his rejection of the centralised state and his distaste for war and the parallels become even more distant.

And yet one can see why the Nazis and the romantic nationalists of the nineteenth century would want to try to lay claim to Herder as part of their intellectual heritage. Herder's understanding of *völk* could easily be supplemented with racial, biological, and hyper-nationalist attributes. His fear of human alienation at the hands of a mechanising modernity anticipated one of the fundamental concerns of almost all the German intellectuals who followed him. Moreover, his generally discriminating and mostly pertinent critique of what came to be seen as the Anglo-French Enlightenment provided a foundation for the increasingly irrational opposition of the next century and a half. Herder, of course, bears no responsibility for the subsequent perversion of his work. His vision of decentralised, self-contained, linguistically-based communities may strike the contemporary observer as hopelessly naive but it did make at least some sense within the context of the fragmented and largely agrarian Germany of the late eighteenth century. It became progressively less plausible and increasingly dangerous when combined with the dramatic geo-political and socio-economic transformations of the nineteenth century.

²⁹ Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, pp.159-60. Nazi propagandists admitted that Herder was "handicapped" by a "lack of race consciousness," See Clark, *Herder*, pp.336-337.

³⁰ Barnard, *Herder*, pp.53-4; Berlin, *Vico and Herder*, p.198.

Herder did not live to see the victory of the rampaging *levee en masse* over the Prussians and the subsequent further strengthening and centralisation of the Prussian state. Other intellectuals were, however, quick to respond to the changed circumstances. In shedding Herder's opposition to the centralised state individuals like Adam Müller, Fichte, and Hegel instead raised it to the pinnacle of the German nation.³¹ Müller suggested that the state was "the interest of all interests, the supreme end, the totality of all human affairs."³² This remark is aimed squarely at Anglo-French empirical and utilitarian interpretations of the nature and role of the state. No longer merely a means towards greater ends, the state becomes an end in itself. Given this new mystique as the very embodiment of the German nation, state worship became an integral part of the German landscape to the later advantage of both the reactionary Wilhelmine regime and Nazism.

The period from 1848 to the late 1870s stands out as a pivotal one for German liberalism and for the role of the intellectual in public life. The failed 1848 Revolution marked a pre-Weimar high water mark for both political liberalism in Germany and the political participation of intellectuals. Subsequently, the liberal parliamentary grouping continued to offer some resistance to Prussian autocracy but Bismarck's twin triumphs - the defeat of Austria and the subsequent victory over France - provided him with an irresistible momentum. And just as political liberalism was tottering, its economic counterpart was being discredited. Germany's relative 'backwardness' always suggested that the reception of free trade doctrines would be problematic and, indeed, German intellectuals were among the first to question Manchester School liberalism. As was the case with Herder's challenge to the political creed of the Enlightenment, German political

³¹ Morgenthau later referred to the 'bad metaphysics' of the Hegelian tradition which endowed: "...a metaphor, such as Power or Leviathan or Minotaur, or a legal abstraction, such as the government or the state, with certain qualities which are meaningful only when they are attributed to real persons." See 'The Evil of Power', *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol.III, No.4, June 1950, p.515.

³² Barnard, *Herder*, pp.54-5. See also Craig, *The Germans*, p.32; Chris Brown, *International Relations Theory: New Normative Approaches* (Columbia University Press, 1992) pp.60-75.

economists asserted historicism - contextuality and particularity - against ahistorical deductive generalisations. In normative terms, communal values were re-asserted against the perceived selfish individualism of the liberal creed. And, in an accusation that would subsequently become a part of the intellectual armoury of Hans Morgenthau, Friederich List charged that beneath the veneer of enlightened economics lay what would later be called the 'imperialism of free trade'. The maintenance of Britain's industrial 'comparative advantage' would serve to bolster its national power and condemn Germans to the status of 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.' German industry would need to be protected by the state if it were to challenge British supremacy.

List's lead was followed by subsequent generations of German political economists. In 1872 the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* (Social Policy Association) was established under the leadership of Gustav Schmoller, Adolph Wagner, and Lujo Brentano with the aim of influencing public policy as well as providing a forum for the pursuit of intellectual problems. In addition to echoing List's by now familiar critique of Manchester Liberalism they advocated a whole range of policies which came to be, for the most part, a widely accepted part of twentieth century socio-economic organisation elsewhere: social insurance schemes, the nationalisation of certain industries, health and safety regulations, public works programmes and so on.³³ Though we can now agree that most of these elements represented a progressive amelioration of laissez-faire capitalism, in the context of Germany in the 1870's they had the unfortunate political consequence of further enhancing state power at the expense of an already weak civil society.

This formidable challenge to liberal political economy was further compounded by the economic turmoil of the 1870s, in particular the disaster of the so-called '*Grundeszeit*' - the speculative boom and bust of the early

³³ Ringer, *Decline*, pp.147-148.

1870s. Recriminations were swift to follow and two groups in particular were singled out for blame: the liberals and those familiar scapegoats of the European past, the Jews. The consequence was a revival of anti-Semitism which had, of course, long been woven into the tapestry of European history and politics. It would be absurd to draw a straight line here from stock exchange to concentration camp but it is also true that from the 1870s anti-Semitism was rarely absent from the mainstream of German life, never fading into the background as it had done periodically in the past. And, as we shall see, the general climate of anti-Semitism had a profound impact upon the young Jewish-German Hans Morgenthau.

We can say with some confidence that liberal attempts to transform the German polity had been stopped dead by 1880. The result was what has been aptly described as the 'feudalisation' of the bourgeois classes. Deferring to the martial values that were increasingly important in this strutting German Empire, the upper middle classes sought social cachet through the marriage of their offspring to the sons and daughters of the nobility, the civil service, and the Junker class in general. Military practices came increasingly to be mimicked in other walks of German life. In commerce the owners of the great conglomerates "ran their enterprises as if they were fortress commanders", much like those 'Captains of Industry' referred to by Carlyle in his wonderfully sardonic summary.³⁴ In the universities, student corporations were modelling their organisations along military lines and many of their teachers were fervent nationalists.

For much of that disillusioned section of the middle classes and intelligentsia not co-opted, the 'escape' from politics and the political sphere proved an alternative. For many this amounted to little more than the quiet accumulation of property in a manner which is utterly routine in our own societies at the end of the twentieth century. Others, however, pursued more

³⁴ Craig, *The Germans*, p.239.

imaginative forms of escape, some of them leading to quite dangerous forms of irrationalism.

'Escape' had always been a component of German romanticism and hence a familiar theme in Germany since at least the 1770s. Resolutely anti-modern, romanticism defined itself against industrialisation and urbanisation, against the scientific demystification and subjugation of nature which served to denaturalise man himself, and against the Cartesian duality of mind and body. It amounted, in sum, to a reassertion of man's warm irrational whole in opposition to cold, alienating reason. No German captured the spirit of Romanticism better than Richard Wagner. A participant in the failed Dresden uprising of 1848, Wagner withdrew into the fantastic universe of his operas; a world in which gods rubbed shoulders with men, a realm where chivalric values reigned supreme in a Germany of forests and mountains where, very often, no trace of urban conglomeration was to be found anywhere. Other more sober thinkers were also influenced by romanticism. Even Goethe, so often a defender of the classical against the romantic, wrote a novel in which a young man leaves a bourgeois life behind in order to embark upon a romantic journey of self-discovery.³⁵

Though Gordon Craig is right to suggest that most romantics were essentially unpolitical, it is easy to see how romanticism could come to have profound political implications, particularly when combined with the ever more assertive nationalism of the late nineteenth century.³⁶ Herder's, in at least some senses, relatively cosmopolitan notion of a *Völk* was transmogrified into an ugly, explicitly racist claim to German ethnic and national supremacy, based upon the most romantic and unhistorical foundations imaginable and buttressed by the 'scientific' support of the legions of charlatans plying their trade in anthropology, philology, and phrenology. And while the activities of

³⁵ Craig, *The Germans*, p.192.

³⁶ *ibid.*

the romantically-inspired youth movements that became so popular may have been harmless enough in isolation, the heady brew of German nationalism and *völkisch* mysticism its members were exposed to made them easy fodder for Hitler.³⁷

The Crisis of Modernity

None of this actually served to prevent profound economic change. In the four and a half decades from 1870 to 1914 "Germany was transformed from a relatively backward and predominantly agricultural nation into one of the greatest industrial powers in the world."³⁸ Urbanisation went ahead at a rapid rate and the population increased by some sixty percent in a period of forty years.³⁹ And though Junkerdom clung to its political prerogatives, industrialisation continued to undermine its agricultural base in spite of protectionism. Add to this the escape from politics described above, a nascent industrial proletariat, and an increasingly bellicose German Government headed by an erratic, over ambitious, young monarch and it is not surprising that so many came to feel a pervasive sense of unease and even threat, such as to amount to what I will call the 'Crisis of Modernity'. There were, however, as we shall see, individuals, modernists, who chose neither escape into a world of romantic and *völkisch* fantasy nor the submission to Prussian autocracy.

There is no single understanding of what 'modernity' is or who 'modernists' are, no straightforward and uncontested definition of the kind beloved of textbook authors and their student readers. For Nicholas Rengger, as for many others, modernists or moderns are those involved with the

³⁷ For a good discussion of these themes see George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of The Third Reich* (Grosset and Dunlop, New York, 1964).

³⁸ Ringer, *Decline*, p.42.

³⁹ *ibid.*

promotion and defense of the 'Project of Enlightenment', however this may be defined and understood.⁴⁰ For Peter Gay modernists could be both exultant destroyers of the old and haters of the new, artists who could simultaneously usher in the modern whilst turning their backs upon it.⁴¹ I have no desire to contest the validity of either usage but I do want to make clear that the conception I adopt here is somewhat different. Much of this should have been implicit from the discussion thus far but, to re-iterate, I understand modernity to constitute that process of material/technological and cultural change initiated by the rise of capitalism and industrialisation and necessitating an ever more specialised division of labour, increasing urbanisation, secularisation, and the growing impact of the masses upon political and social structures. To be a modernist, I would suggest, is first and foremost to recognise the impact of these changes and, secondly, to accept its inexorability in broad terms. Men as subjects may be able to shape and mould this modernity but they cannot, Canute-like, turn it aside nor can they wish it away. Modernists need not have a normative commitment to modernity, but they must at least offer it a resigned acceptance.

In the German context then we can see why certain of the groups discussed thus far were not comprised of modernists: romantics and 'escapists', *völkisch* mystics harkening after the rejuvenation of hyper-idealised communities which have probably never existed, the most reactionary of conservatives etc.⁴² In the political, and especially the intellectual circles of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Germany there were relatively few modernists. Of those who were the most important grouping, for our purposes, was centred on the new discipline of sociology.

⁴⁰ Nicholas Rengger, *Political Theory, Modernity and Postmodernity: Beyond Enlightenment and Critique* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1995) p.94.

⁴¹ See Peter Gay, *Freud, Jews, and other Germans* (Oxford University Press, 1978) pp.21-28.

⁴² The above understanding of modernity is, I would suggest, compatible with a more enlightened and measured kind of conservatism. Conservatives are, of course, the creation of modernity but they are not necessarily modernists.

Sociology was a quintessentially modern subject: a natural outgrowth of the empirical, historicist, concerns of German political economy. The man most reflective of this new discipline was Ferdinand Tönnies whose 1887 work *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Community and Society) was of fundamental importance in shaping the subject. For Tönnies, as for virtually all of his colleagues, modernity was transforming the landscape of Germany through the replacement of the organic, personal, links of *Gemeinschaft* with the more mechanistic, informal, instrumentally rational operations of *Gesellschaft*. There is no doubt that setting up this antithesis carried with it the danger of reaction and romance, of the nostalgia for idealised other-worldly 'communities'. Tönnies himself regarded the replacement of *Gemeinschaft* with *Gesellschaft* as a great tragedy but the sociologists distinguished themselves from their romantic contemporaries by their forthright acceptance of the imperative to square up to the realities of modernity, forgoing the luxury of 'escape'.⁴³ Indeed in Max Weber's case resolve may even, in one reading at least, merge into a grim fatalism, an 'iron cage' of modernity in which man as subject disappears beneath a suffocating blanket of specialisation and bureaucratisation. Karl Mannheim, alternatively, may have been naively optimistic in his hopes for an intelligentsia able to break free of the 'iron cage' and help in shaping the course of modernity.

To link Hans Morgenthau with these modernists may seem somewhat perverse given the common association of Morgenthau with a reactionary, even nostalgic, political 'realism' based upon allegedly age-old forms of political behaviour. This is undoubtedly a controversial suggestion which will require further explanation.⁴⁴ For the moment, though, we need to introduce Morgenthau to the narrative.

⁴³ My discussion of Tönnies is based upon Fritz Ringer's excellent summary. See Ringer, *Decline*, pp.162-175.

⁴⁴ I don't wish to claim that Morgenthau was a thoroughgoing modernist in the manner of Weber who, for example, thought that the study of history had a purely antiquarian value, unlike Morgenthau. I do want to stress that the modernist elements in Morgenthau have been neglected in other accounts as has the intellectual influence of modernists like Nietzsche, Weber, and Mannheim.

Morgenthau and the 'Jewish Problem'

To be a German Jew or more precisely a Jewish-German was awkward enough; to later add the status of intellectual amounted to a combination as problematic as one could imagine anywhere in the first half of the twentieth century. Hans Joachim Morgenthau was born in 1904 in the town of Coburg, at that time the capital of the independent Duchy of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, later to be absorbed by Bavaria. Coburg had been a relatively important commercial centre since at least the Middle Ages as a stop along the trade routes running from Augsburg and Nürnberg to Northern Germany. Coburg (population 24,000) now served as the market town for the surrounding agricultural areas in addition to having various forms of light industry, the bureaucracy of the Duchy, and a small artistic community centred on the theatre.⁴⁵ Morgenthau was the only son of a doctor: an authoritarian *paterfamilias* according to Morgenthau's account. It has frequently been noted that children without siblings are natural candidates for the introspective 'life of the mind' and this, in combination with his father's iron hand made, in Morgenthau's self-description, for a rather shy, withdrawn and unhappy child of artistic bent. His father looms as a massive presence extending even into Morgenthau's early adulthood in rejecting his son's choices of both university and subject and exhorting him to join a duelling fraternity.⁴⁶ A second and clearly more pernicious influence was the prevailing atmosphere of anti-Semitism.

I have already noted that the financial crisis of the 1870s served to stimulate anti-Semitism. Many German 'intellectuals' played their part in this

⁴⁵ N.F. Hayward and D.S. Morris, *The First Nazi Town*, (Gower Publishing, 1988) p.2; Bernard Johnson 'Interview with Hans Morgenthau', in *Truth and Tragedy*, eds. Kenneth Thompson and Robert Myers, (Transaction Books, New Brunswick, 1984) pp.331,334.

⁴⁶ Johnson, 'Interview', pp.338,342; Hans Morgenthau, 'Fragment of an Intellectual Biography' in Thompson/Myers(eds.), *Truth and Tragedy*, p.4.

revival. A crudely irrational Social Darwinism combined with the 'science' of phrenology to be used as racial weapons against the Jews. Eugen Dühring's *The Jewish Question* (1880) suggested that Jewish 'depravity' in every sphere could be linked with specifically racial characteristics.⁴⁷ The notorious, transplanted Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain, in addition to the by now familiar racism, established to his evident satisfaction that Jesus Christ himself was not a Jew, thus paving the way for a properly Aryan Christ. The German race, he suggested, was engaged in nothing less than a 'mortal struggle' against Judaism.⁴⁸

There is some debate here as to what we are to make of these developments. For Gordon Craig the picture is one of a constant downward spiral in Jewish fortunes beginning in the 1870's:

"Every argument that National Socialist orators used against the Jews had been made before 1914; the only difference was that the Nazis had the strength of their convictions and turned these arguments into a program of action... All that was needed was Adolf Hitler's demonic will to transform it into reality."⁴⁹

This may be rather too deterministic, even unhistorical. Peter Gay provides a more nuanced reading. The anti-Semitism of the nineteenth century, he suggests, was different in kind from that of the twentieth.⁵⁰ Indeed, Gay feels that at the turn of the century Jews could fairly claim to look back upon 'a century of emancipation.'⁵¹ While restrictions remained in certain areas, the 'liberal' professions had opened up and Jews were, in general, much more diversified in their social and professional status.⁵² Jews had come to adopt German as their first language over the course of the nineteenth century and

⁴⁷ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, p.94.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* pp.95-96.

⁴⁹ Craig, *The Germans*, p.140.

⁵⁰ Gay, *Freud, Jews and Other Germans*, p.15.

⁵¹ *ibid.* p.95.

⁵² *ibid.* pp.95-96.

had made strenuous efforts to make themselves indistinguishable from their fellow Germans. Popular anti-Semitism, Gay suggests, was less active in the 1890s than in the preceding two decades and 'racialists' had been discredited in many circles.⁵³ The Dreyfus Affair in France and pogroms in Eastern Europe presented more cause for concern than anything at home.⁵⁴ In short, "Germany's Jews had therefore good reason to feel themselves, or to aspire to feel themselves to be Jewish Germans."⁵⁵ For Gay it was the poisonous legacy of the First World War that transformed the situation. Both accept, however, that in the end the strenuous efforts of Germany's Jews to assimilate had amounted to naught.⁵⁶

Morgenthau has pointed out that his father, too, was driven by "this senseless assimilationism among many German Jews."⁵⁷ And, whatever the status of Gay's general claims it is clear that the town of Coburg was rife with anti-Semitism during the early part of the twentieth century. Coburg has in fact attained a permanent notoriety by virtue of its status as 'The First Nazi Town' where Hitler had been active as early as 1922. In 1924 an alliance of various right-wing parties won a majority in the *Landtag* elections with an explicitly anti-Semitic campaign which called for "the removal of all civil rights from Jews". This 'first' was added to in 1929 when Coburg became the first town in Germany to elect a majority National Socialist town council.⁵⁸ It appears that Duke Carl Eduard, who had been forced to abdicate after the First World War, remained an influential patron and active supporter of the Nazis in the region. This same Carl Eduard presided over an event that Morgenthau described as the most traumatic experience of his life.

⁵³ *ibid.* pp.94, 109.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.166.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p.19.

⁵⁶ See Craig, *The Germans*, p.141 and Gay, *Freud*, pp.3-28, 93-168.

⁵⁷ Johnson, 'Interview', p.340.

⁵⁸ Hayward and Morris, *The First Nazi Town*, pp.69-71, 97, 113.

There was, it seems, an annual ceremony in honour of the Duke at which the most academically successful pupil from the local *Gymnasium* was given the responsibility of crowning a statue of the Duke and making a speech. This dubious pleasure fell to Morgenthau one year and his own account is worth recalling at some length:

"I was the first in my class so I was the one to do this. Of course there was an enormous commotion: "Should we let that Jew make the speech and crown our Duke?" But there was no way of getting around it. I was the best student in the school so I was decided upon. On the morning of the celebration anti-Semitic leaflets were distributed which contained mean and disparaging remarks about me... They called for demonstrations and so, of course, I was pretty much frightened. But I went up there, anyway, and made my speech. Afterward we marched to a meadow just outside the town for more celebrations. This was the worst day of my life because nobody would speak to me on that march. Nobody would walk beside me. People shouted at me and spit at me. (NP) It was a kind of, as they say in German, "spiessruden laufen"- "running the gauntlet". People shook their fists at me and shouted anti-Semitic insults. It was terrible. Absolutely terrible ... Photos were taken at this ceremony and I still have one today. You can see the Duke sitting at the window in that photo, together with Count Westorp ... They are holding their noses while I am standing there giving my speech. There was a folklore in Germany that Jews smelled, just as racists in [the United States] believe that Negroes have a particular odor. Yes, that was probably the worst day of my life I would guess."⁵⁹

A school essay written at approximately the same time expressed the frustration no doubt felt by thousands of other Jewish Germans:

"My relationship to the social environment is determined by three facts: I am a German, I am a Jew, and I have matured in the period following the war.

⁵⁹ Johnson, 'Interview', pp.340-341.

Certain groups within our society and, more particularly, the socially dominant ones, are inclined to hold responsible for all changes and deficiencies of our period of history that segment of our society to which I belong. Regardless of the merits of these accusations, one thing is certain: I am innocent of what the Jews are reproached with. The accusations that are directed against me as a Jew are totally unjustified."⁶⁰

Both of these extracts make for poignant reading. The latter shows an exasperation that his Jewishness, a mere accident of birthright, appears inescapable: *I am innocent of what the Jews are reproached with.*

Some years later his attempt to gain a professorship at the University of Frankfurt was rejected on the basis that the university already retained too many Jewish instructors.⁶¹ He also claims that a strong anti-Jewish prejudice was present in American universities in the period before and immediately after the Second World War.⁶²

In his biography of Henry Kissinger Walter Isaacson notes that his subject was exposed to a similar array of anti-Semitic experiences. The legacy, he suggests, was a 'philosophical pessimism'. Going further still he claims that "the Nazi experience could have instilled in Kissinger either of two approaches to foreign policy: an idealistic, moralistic approach dedicated to protecting human rights; or a realist, *realpolitik* approach which sought to preserve order through balances of power and a willingness to use force as a tool of diplomacy."⁶³ It would seem to me that there is a great deal wrong with the second of these claims at least. Setting aside the possibility that Kissinger could have gone on to become a suburban accountant who never gave another thought to foreign affairs, it can hardly be very helpful to

⁶⁰ Morgenthau, 'Fragment' p.2.

⁶¹ Johnson, 'Interview' p.352. See also his letter to Professor Niels Amstrup of November 29, 1978 (*Hans J. Morgenthau Papers*, Box 5, Adams Library, Library of Congress, Washington DC) where he adds that another reason for his moving to Geneva was the "intolerable increase in anti-semitism."

⁶² *idid*, p.365

⁶³ Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (Faber and Faber, London, 1992) p.31.

suggest that a single set of childhood experiences could be responsible for instilling a realistic *or* an idealistic approach to international politics.⁶⁴ In the tracing of intellectual biographies it is rarely convincing to make connections like this in such a direct manner.

However, I would like to venture a couple of tentative suggestions concerning the impact of anti-Semitism upon Morgenthau. The first is simply to state that Morgenthau's childhood experiences gave him an early exposure to social conflict. The second is the probability that this powerful conflict of identities helped to sharpen his critical faculties and encourage the 'independence of judgement' which Freud found so often to be a part of the make-up of Jewish intellectuals.⁶⁵ It may also have served to stimulate the existential angst, the air of pathos, that Morgenthau's works contain in contrast with those of many of his colleagues in post-war American political science. It is, of course, a truism that most of us are subject to competing claims of identity and that there is nothing unique about Jewishness in this respect. Few of these clashes have been as acute as 'the Jewish problem' in Europe however, and fewer still have had such tragic consequences.

Despite this traumatic childhood Morgenthau qualified for university admission and he entered the University of Frankfurt, one of the newly established German universities, in 1923 and stayed for a semester before switching to Munich to study law.⁶⁶ Student life for Morgenthau included experiencing the dubious pleasures of the *Mensur* as a member of a (presumably Jewish) duelling fraternity.⁶⁷ His participation in this 'aping of aristocratic customs' as he described it, was at the behest of his father who

⁶⁴ Isaacson's biography suggests that Kissinger was indeed studying to become an accountant until a chance encounter with one Fritz Kraemer shifted him towards an interest in international politics. The point, I think, should be that the political turmoil of Central Europe stimulated political and philosophical thought of a wide variety of shades.

⁶⁵ Freud in Ringer, *Decline*, p.239. Morgenthau suggested in the school essay quoted earlier that his critical attitude towards the 'socially dominant group' had been sharpened. See Morgenthau, 'Fragment' p.2.

⁶⁶ His father would not permit his preferred choice of literature.

⁶⁷ Marx and Weber also participated in the *Mensur*.

considered that it would mark the culmination of his son's assimilation into German society.⁶⁸

Intellectually he, naturally enough, found most of his law lectures uninspiring and he spent as much time as was permitted in taking courses outside the field. During his first stay in Munich he appears to have been exposed to *Realpolitik* in the lectures of the historian Herman Oncken who specialised in German history of the nineteenth century and, in particular, the foreign policy of the Bismarckian period. Oncken, his pupil later suggested, "...entered into an historic period or personality, and reconstructed it, laying bare the hidden connections of motivations, actions, and consequences." Morgenthau felt reassured to discover that his hitherto "isolated and impressionistic" thoughts on foreign policy were "in the Bismarckian tradition."⁶⁹ In reading Oncken one becomes even more aware of the strength of the connection. Many of the elements of Morgenthau's version of realism were present in Oncken: a strong emphasis upon the importance of the balance of power, the "immutable component of the national will to power" and so on.⁷⁰ There is too, as we will see in Morgenthau's work, an overlay of idealism upon this *Realpolitik* evidenced when Oncken refers to "...the unwritten law of morality which guides the life of nations and sets bounds to the egoism of national interests."⁷¹

⁶⁸ He carried the physical scars for the rest of the life. See Johnson, 'Interview', pp.342-343. Morgenthau's father was right to imply that participation in the *Mensur* represented one of the most strenuous of Jewish attempts to assimilate. Denied entry to most fraternities because Jews were considered incapable of providing 'satisfaction', many Jewish students established their own fraternities which strove to imitate the very organisations which had excluded them, often with an extra zeal and ferocity. Peter Gay reports that a Jewish student was four times more likely to engage in a duel than a non-Jew. As a Jewish medical student put it: "We have to fight with all our energy against the odium of cowardice and weakness which is cast on us. We want to show that every member of our association is equal to every Christian fellow student in any physical exercise and chivalry." For further treatment of the *Mensur* and the role of Jewish fraternities in it see Peter Gay, *The Cultivation of Hatred* (Fontana Press, London, 1993) pp.9-33; Mosse, *Crisis*, pp.194-199.

⁶⁹ Johnson, 'Interview', p.344; Morgenthau, 'Fragment', pp.5-6. Oncken was an open admirer of Bismarck but we have no record of how, if at all, Morgenthau responded to Weber's rather more hostile assessment.

⁷⁰ Herman Oncken, *Napoleon III and the Rhine*, trans. Edwin H. Zeydel, (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1928) p.57. The importance of leadership was another of Oncken's themes including the fateful claim that the party politics of Weimar were unlikely to provide the appropriate conditions for the emergence of great leaders.

⁷¹ *ibid.* p.190.

After a year in Berlin deepening his legal studies Morgenthau returned to Munich for the first of his examinations and the position as a law clerk that followed.⁷² Whilst working he continued to take classes and two were of particular importance: Karl Neumeyer's seminar on international law and, above all, Karl Rothenbücher's seminar on the political and social philosophy of Max Weber.⁷³

Back in Frankfurt once more Morgenthau worked as an assistant to a lawyer whilst reading for a doctorate in the area of international law with the title *Die Internationale Rechtspflege, ihr Wesen ihre Grenzen* (The International Judicial Function: its Nature and its Limits). Morgenthau claims that the original title of the thesis, rejected by his supervisor, was *The International Judicial Function: its Nature and the Concept of Politics* :

"Having learned already that international law is a particularly weak kind of law, I now discovered that the main source of its weakness stems from the intrusion of international politics. From that discovery there was but one step to the conclusion that what really mattered in relations among nations was not international law but international politics."⁷⁴

Morgenthau's claim that, in effect, he had established his realist credentials by the late 1920s has been the subject of some dispute. Christoph Frei and Niels Amstrup accept that there is a fundamental continuity in all of Morgenthau's writings.⁷⁵ Alfons Söllner and Jan Willem Honig give a very different account of Morgenthau's ideas changing dramatically between 1929

⁷² For an amusing account of his experiences with the local peasantry in the Bavarian village he was assigned to see Johnson, 'Interview', pp.345-348.

⁷³ Morgenthau, 'Fragment', pp.7-8; Johnson, 'Interview', pp.347-348. A fellow Jew, Neumeyer committed suicide with his wife when threatened with arrest by the Nazis. Morgenthau wrote his obituary for the October 1941 issue of *The American Journal of International Law*. Morgenthau, 'Fragment', pp.8-9.

⁷⁴ Morgenthau, 'Fragment', p.9.

⁷⁵ Christoph Frei, *Hans J. Morgenthau: Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Paul Haupt, Bern, 1993); Niels Amstrup, 'The 'Early' Morgenthau: A Comment on the Intellectual Origins of Realism,' *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol.13, 1978, pp.163-175.

and 1948 (or even 1954).⁷⁶ Söllner describes "the traumatic transformation of a Weimar liberal into an American conservative" as reflected by the second edition of *Politics Among Nations* (1954).⁷⁷ The difficulty with this account is that it simply isn't clear how the label of 'conservative' can make any sense for Morgenthau in the American context. European conservatism is, I would suggest, so different from its American (and, increasingly, English) namesake that linking the two is deeply problematic.⁷⁸ Honig's account of change is more straightforward: idealist to realist. Honig claims that it was the Second World War which 'radicalised' Morgenthau.⁷⁹ Up until that point "...he still had not entirely shed his earlier optimism and idealism... It was only in his 1946 *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics* that the "realist" Morgenthau emerged."⁸⁰ As has already been suggested, we should be wary of accounts which seek to crystallise Morgenthau so directly. Had Honig read on beyond *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics* and *Politics Among Nations* to *The Purpose of American Politics* he would no doubt have had to account for the re-emergence of the 'idealist' Morgenthau. It would be plausible to argue that Morgenthau's appreciation of 'the political' was becoming sharper over the course of the late 1920s and 1930s and that the Second World War and the American nuclear attack upon Japan further strengthened it but a straightforward narrative of an idealist evolving into a realist is deeply unconvincing.

Honig is right to point out that most accounts of the evolution of realism and of Morgenthau's intellectual genealogy have ignored the impact of particular twentieth century developments, but his alternative association

⁷⁶ Alfons Söllner, 'German Conservatism in America: Morgenthau's Political Realism', *Telos*, Vol.72, Summer 1987, pp.161-172; Jan Willem Honig, 'Totalitarianism and Realism: Hans Morgenthau's German Years', in Benjamin Frankel (ed.) *Roots of Realism* (Frank Cass, London, 1996) pp.283-313.

⁷⁷ Söllner, 'German Conservatism', pp.163-175.

⁷⁸ The claim that "...American conservatism is more optimistic, materialistic, and individualistic than the conservative tradition" should in fact, be to accept that it is not usefully described as conservatism at all. See Kenneth Thompson, *Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1960) pp.79-80. Morgenthau himself accepted that conservatism "...has no place in the American tradition of politics." See 'The Decline of American Government', *New Republic*, December 16 1957, pp.9-10.

⁷⁹ Honig, 'Totalitarianism and Realism', p.284.

⁸⁰ *ibid.* p.304.

of totalitarianism with realism is crudely sensational.⁸¹ With the possible exception of Carl Schmitt who, in any case, was more self-promoting opportunist than authentic totalitarian ideologue, none of the figures associated most closely with Morgenthau's intellectual development can reasonably be associated with Nazism. As an alternative genealogy there are, I think, four individuals we need to examine in terms of their influence upon Morgenthau: Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Mannheim, Max Weber, and Carl Schmitt.

A Modern Genealogy

An exploration of the links between Morgenthau and Friedrich Nietzsche needs to be pursued with caution. It would, after all, be possible to construct a virtually endless list of seemingly disparate individuals and socio-political groups, all of them claiming Nietzsche as an important influence. It may well be that there is something in Nietzsche for almost everyone. Even so, and with this caveat firmly in mind, I do think that there are intellectual connections worth bringing to light. Morgenthau has himself emphasised the importance of Nietzsche. He urged his regular correspondent Louis Halle to read Nietzsche and he also sought to impress upon his students that they should not make the usual association of Nietzsche with Nazism.⁸² In a letter written in support for the funding of a prospective book on Nietzsche, he stressed that there was a "serious need" for a reappraisal because "both the German nationalists and Nazis and their Anglo-Saxon opponents have made a caricature of Nietzsche's political philosophy. Yet Nietzsche has probably been the most influential single philosophic influence, together with Marx

⁸¹ *ibid.* p.283.

⁸² See Louis J.Halle, 'General Education and the Understanding of Politics: The Case of Hans J. Morgenthau', in Thompson/Myers (eds.) *Truth and Tragedy*, p.65. For the remarks to his students see his lecture notes of May 1, 1962 in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 19. All the lecture notes in the *Morgenthau Papers* appear to have been prepared by his students but as he retained them we can only assume that he was reasonably satisfied with their summaries.

and Freud, in the European continent during the last half century."⁸³In a letter detailing those individuals of most significance in shaping him intellectually he described Nietzsche as "a most powerful and probably decisive influence..."⁸⁴

We can certainly trace the way in which Morgenthau adopted Nietzsche's notion of a 'Will to Power'. Morgenthau first referred to it in his *La notion du "Politique"* and it appears again as an important component of his first American book *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics*.⁸⁵ For both, this ubiquitous power drive had organic origins. "Where I found a living creature, there I found the will to power; and even in the will of the servant I found the will to be master" asserted Nietzsche in the guise of his prophet Zarathustra.⁸⁶ Morgenthau referred to the *animus dominandi*, the lust for power. For both this elemental instinct extended well beyond the mere imperative of survival. Nietzsche: "A living thing desires above all to vent its strength- life as such is the will to power-: self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent consequences of it..."⁸⁷ Morgenthau distinguished a mere basic selfishness, "food, shelter, security, and the means by which they are obtained" from "the desire for power which concerns itself not with the individual's survival but with his position among his fellows once his survival has been secured. Consequently, the selfishness of man has limits; his will to power has none."⁸⁸

⁸³ Letter to Kenneth Thompson, Rockefeller Foundation, Dec.23, 1959, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 49.

⁸⁴ Letter to Samuel Magill, January 5 1962, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 39.

⁸⁵ Morgenthau, *La Notion du "Politique"* pp.42-43, cited in Honig, 'Totalitarianism and Realism', p.287. *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1974 (1946)) pp.192-193

⁸⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J Hollingdale, (Penguin Classics, 1961) p.137. "Exploitation...pertains to the essence of the living thing as a fundamental organic function, it is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power which is precisely the will of life." *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Penguin Classics 1973, revised edition 1990) p.259.

⁸⁷ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.13.

⁸⁸ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, p.193. Reinhold Niebuhr made the similar claim that "every group, as every individual, has expansive desires which are rooted in the instinct of survival and soon extend beyond it. The will-to-live becomes the will-to-power." See his *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1960 [1932]) p.18.

There are, manifestly, any number of problems involved in assuming this sort of universal lust for power, including the obviously questionable animomorphism. Morgenthau's difficulties with the assumption of power maximisation will be explored in detail in the next chapter. For the moment it is enough to note that it gave rise to similar tensions and inconsistencies in the works of both men. As Janko Lavrin has pointed out "...Nietzsche does not make it clear whether such 'will to power' operates as an independent agent, or as a predetermined tool of 'necessity', or else as a kind of Bergsonian *élan vital*." ⁸⁹ In Morgenthau too, as we shall see, there is a persistent tension between the notion of power maximisation as some sort of mechanistic natural phenomenon or the product of deliberate choices on the part of statesmen.

It is, I hope, not an overextension to make the claim that links can be drawn between Nietzsche's prophecy of the rise of the *Übermensch*, Weber's hopes for the emergence of 'charismatic leadership', and Morgenthau's call for the revivification of the skills of the diplomat.⁹⁰ All three were compelled to place their faith in man in a godless universe; in Zarathustra's words : "All gods are dead: now we want the Superman to live..."⁹¹ All three hoped that exceptional men could help to break the 'iron cage' of a suffocating modernity, again, to quote Zarathustra: "Overcome, you Higher Men, the petty virtues, the petty prudences, the sand-grain discretion, the ant-swarm inanity, miserable ease, the happiness of the greatest number!"⁹² In the market place, as Zarathustra observes, "...no-one believes in Higher Men."⁹³ Morgenthau would not have subscribed to the extreme illiberalism of Nietzsche's summary but there *is* a comparable sense in which he hopes for the emergence of an exceptional elite of diplomats able to transcend the noise of

⁸⁹ Janko Lavrin, *Nietzsche* (Studio Vista, London, 1971) p.85.

⁹⁰ 'Higher Man' may be a better translation than the usual 'Superman', particularly given the latter's unavoidable association in English-speaking countries with the Man of Steel!

⁹¹ Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.102

⁹² *ibid.* p.298.

⁹³ *ibid.* p.297.

the market and the hatreds of mass-based international politics. A similar genealogy can be outlined from Nietzsche through Weber to Morgenthau in terms of their subscription to a consequentialist ethics, an 'ethics of responsibility' which is juxtaposed against Kant's categorical imperative, an 'ethics of absolute conviction'.⁹⁴ The problems this presented for both Weber and Morgenthau will be explored later in the chapter.

Finally, we can see quite clearly that Morgenthau and Nietzsche shared a similar sense of modernistic angst, of a common quest for moral and existential meaning. The dilemma was the same: in a godless universe with man as merely another form of animal where could moral foundations be found? Neither, I would suggest, was ever able to provide a satisfactory answer. Marshall Berman, in his well known book on the phenomenon of modernity, asserts that "Nietzsche's own stance towards the perils of modernity is to embrace them all with joy... As ardently as Marx, he asserts his faith in a new kind of man..."⁹⁵ This strikes me as a grossly one-sided reading. To be sure, Nietzsche does his best to convince himself that this is, indeed, the case. In his 1882 resolution for the New Year he writes that "...I want to be at all times hereafter only an affirmer."⁹⁶ Even so it is a strange kind of affirmer, and an even stranger kind of prophet, who seems to recoil from virtually everything he encounters in the world. Nietzsche, in his thinly disguised alter-ego of Zarathustra, seems dismayed by all that he encounters on his travels, continually returning to the refuge of his mountain lair.⁹⁷ A more balanced reading of Nietzsche is that of an individual torn between the engagement with and the flight from modernity.⁹⁸ Nothing illustrates this antinomy better than his convoluted relationship with Richard Wagner:

⁹⁴ See for example Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp.44-46.

⁹⁵ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (Verso, London, 1983) p.23.

⁹⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (Random House, 1974) p.276.

⁹⁷ Nietzsche/Zarathustra's alienation seems clear enough: "When I went to men for the first time, I committed the folly of hermits, the great folly: I set myself in the market-place. And when I spoke to everyone, I spoke to no one." Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.296.

⁹⁸ The story of Nietzsche's own life is, of course, that he led an increasingly hermit-like asocial existence until his final mental breakdown.

simultaneously seduced and revolted by Wagner's music and the romantic escape that it proffered from the problems of modernity. Hans Morgenthau, too, shared this ambivalence as I will show in chapter three.

The ambivalence of engagement was also reflected in Morgenthau's response to the work of Karl Mannheim. Mannheim is best known for his contribution to what has come to be called 'the sociology of knowledge'. In Mannheim's case, as Raymond Aron has pointed out, this amounted to a rather odd amalgam of Marxism and historicism.⁹⁹ Mannheim was part of a group of left-wing writers in pre-World War One Budapest who subscribed to Georg Lukacs's belief that intellectuals ought to be at the vanguard of progressive social change.¹⁰⁰ In the context of Weimar Germany Mannheim suggested that the intelligentsia could provide at least a partial solution to one of the central problems of modernity: Weber's 'iron cage' of bureaucratisation, specialisation, and instrumental rationality. In his influential work *Ideology and Utopia*, first published in 1929, Mannheim accepted the essentially marxist/materialist proposition that ideas were a function of a class or groups social position.¹⁰¹ Unlike Marx, however, Mannheim did not believe that a particular class or group (i.e. the proletariat) was the bearer of a universal truth and the others of a false consciousness.¹⁰² Instead we have a relativistic, historicist image of classes and other social groups unable to see beyond the limitation of their own socially determined perspectives. Mannheim claimed that the only "...unanchored, *relatively* (Mannheim's

⁹⁹ Raymond Aron, *German Sociology*, trans. Mary and Thomas Bottomore, (William Heinemann, London, 1957) pp. 55-56.

¹⁰⁰ On Mannheim's Hungarian experiences see H. Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought 1930-1965* (Harper and Row, London, 1975) p.76; Edward Sagarin and Robert J. Kelly, 'Karl Mannheim and the Sociology of Knowledge', in *The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals*, ed. Robert Boyer, (Schollen Books, New York, 1972) p.273.

¹⁰¹ Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils, (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd, London, 1936). EH Carr was another to be heavily influenced by Mannheim. See Charles Jones, 'Carr: Ambivalent Realist', in *Post-Realism: the rhetorical turn in international relations*, eds. Francis A. Beer and Robert Hariman, (Michigan State University Press, 1996) pp.101-102.

¹⁰² Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia*, p.137. in addition to Marx, Mannheim suggested that Nietzsche was "the other source of the modern theory of ideology and of the sociology of knowledge."

emphasis) classless stratum is, to use Alfred Weber's terminology, the "socially unattached intelligentsia".¹⁰³ These 'free floating' intellectuals could, Mannheim suggested, seek refuge in romantic and religious transcendence or in the conscious renunciation of a "direct participation in the historical process" but his hope was that the intelligentsia would assume a vital political function: the "special task" of providing "an interpretation of the world for [each] society."¹⁰⁴

Hans Morgenthau's reaction to all of this was an ambiguous one. In his *Fragment of an Intellectual Biography* he discusses his exposure to Marxism and 'modern sociology' through meeting scholars and attending lectures held under the auspices of the *Institut für Sozialforschung* at the University of Frankfurt:

"I was particularly struck and repelled by the contrast between the real political situation in Germany and the futile hair-splitting in which the ordinary members of the *Institut* engaged. The Nazi enemy was standing at the gate, aided and abetted from within, and these intelligent and learned people, the natural enemies and designated victims of Nazism, found nothing better to do than search for the true meaning of one statement by Marx as over against another. On the evening before I left Germany I attended a lecture at the *Institut* - if memory serves, the speaker was Karl Mannheim - that was dedicated to the proposition of the decisive role "free-floating intelligence" had to play in the struggle against Nazism. More and more I came to appreciate Marx's statement to his son-in-law: "*Moi, Je ne suis pas Marxiste*".¹⁰⁵

This public expression of exasperation at Mannheim's naiveté is balanced by much more favourable private remarks.¹⁰⁶ And it is possible,

¹⁰³ *ibid.* p.137.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* pp. 9,233.

¹⁰⁵ Morgenthau 'Fragment', p.14.

¹⁰⁶ See, for example, the letter to Thomas Robinson in which he confirms that Mannheim was an important influence. Letter to Thomas W. Robinson, 3 November 1969, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 49.

once again, to point to direct intellectual links. Morgenthau's treatment of ideology as a disguise (often unconscious) for the pursuit of interest appears to be drawn almost directly from Mannheim. In a letter to Edward Shils Morgenthau claimed that "...I find after re-reading Mannheim that the meaning in which I use the term corresponds exactly to his concept of "particular ideology" to which the idea of disguise is essential."¹⁰⁷ Mannheim, in common with so many other German intellectuals, accepted that liberalism served to mask the real essence of politics:

"The rise of the bourgeoisie was attended by an extreme intellectualism. Intellectualism, as it was used in this connection, refers to a mode of thought which either does not see the elements in life and in thought which are based on will, interest, emotion, and *Weltanschauung* - or, if it does recognise their existence, treats them as though they were equivalent to the intellect and believes that they may be mastered by and subordinated to reason. This bourgeois intellectualism expressly demanded such a scientific politics, and actually proceeded to found such a discipline."¹⁰⁸

This neatly encapsulates the main theme of Morgenthau's first book *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics*. Morgenthau's apparent scepticism towards the idea of 'free floating intelligence' is a reflection of a deeply rooted ambivalence rather than a firmly held rejection of the idea. Indeed, as we shall see in chapter three, Morgenthau came to accept that the intellectual had both the capacity and the duty to engage with the political sphere, to speak 'truth to power'.

In this he was following the example of Max Weber who was by some distance his most important intellectual influence. This should come as little surprise given Max Weber's status as one of the most important intellectuals of the last hundred years. He is one of the few authors of his period who is able to 'speak' so directly to an audience of our time. One only has to look

¹⁰⁷Letter to Edward Shils, December 31 1947, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 174. He makes a public acknowledgement of this intellectual debt in his *Politics Among Nations* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1948) p.68.

¹⁰⁸ Mannheim, *Ideology*, p.108.

around to see a swarm of bureaucrats, in their contemporary guise of 'managers', invading every sphere of human endeavour much as Weber had anticipated. Morgenthau considered his exposure to Weber to have been one of the most important experiences of his life.¹⁰⁹

"Weber's political thought possessed all the intellectual and moral qualities I had looked for in vain in the contemporary literature inside and outside the universities. For one who has not lived through this period of German history, it is impossible to visualise the ignorance, confusion, meanness, and general moral and intellectual degradation that dominated German public life and upon which the authority of great scholars bestowed a semblance of moral and intellectual legitimacy. Weber was everything most of his colleagues pretended to be but were not. While as a citizen he was a passionate observer of the political scene and a frustrated participant in it, as a scholar he looked at politics without passion and pursued no political purpose beyond the intellectual one of understanding."¹¹⁰

Though sometimes omitted from the ahistorical pantheon of 'realist' thinkers he is actually a far more important figure than the 'usual suspects' rounded up: Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes et al.¹¹¹ Given his importance to Morgenthau and to realism in general we need to examine Weber at some length.¹¹²

Max Weber

Weber has been a figure of some controversy for much of the twentieth century and the subject of dramatically disparate assessments.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ See the transcript of the 'Values in Contemporary Society' Rockefeller Foundation Conference of July 13, 1972, p.37, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 174.

¹¹⁰ Morgenthau, 'Fragment' p.7.

¹¹¹ Smith's *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger* is an exception.

¹¹² Arnold Wolfers was one of the few contemporaries of Morgenthau to be aware that he was following in Weber's footsteps. See his 'Statesmanship and Moral Choice', *World Politics*, Vol. 1, 1948, p.180.

¹¹³ Lawrence Scaff lists the following 'well-worn categories': 'Weber as "founder" of sociology (Parsons, Bendix), leader of the "revolt against positivism" (Hughes), theoretician of *Machtpolitik* (Mommsen, Aron), defender of "bourgeois reason" (Marcuse, Lukacs), or proponent of "decisionism" and "value nihilism" (Habermas, Strauss). See Lawrence Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics, and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber* (University of California Press, 1989) p.3.

For some he is the standard-bearer for a positivist, value-free social enquiry; for others, including Leo Strauss and Alasdair Macintyre, Weber is "the most important contemporary representative of the position they oppose" that is, 'individualism', 'historicism', 'machiavellianism', 'nietzscheanism' and so on.¹¹⁴ Similarly, very different readings can be made of Weber's approach to politics. One could see him as contextually liberal in his commitment to parliamentary democracy, his challenge to the habitual worship of the German state and in his public opposition to extreme German ambitions during World War One. Students and colleagues of Weber did much to promote this sort of image.¹¹⁵ It is also possible to indict Weber as a red-blooded *Machtpolitiker* who accepted that international politics was an arena for perpetual struggle. Wolfgang Mommsen made this claim in his 1959 work *Max Weber and die Deutsche Politik* where he asserted that the 'national power state' was Weber's ultimate political ideal.¹¹⁶ Many of these debates erupted during the German Sociological Congress held in Heidelberg in 1964 to mark the centenary of Weber's birth.¹¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, the heir to a somewhat different tradition of German thought, challenged both Talcott Parsons' understanding of Weber as a positivist and the 'liberal' interpretation of Weber's international politics. Indeed, for Habermas Carl Schmitt was Weber's 'natural son'.¹¹⁸

As is the case with most thinkers of any importance, a number of plausible readings are possible and I lay no claim to being able to provide the definitive one here. Even so it does seem that the first of these disputes, that of Weber as 'positivist' is perhaps the easier of the two to resolve. For the more one learns of Weber, in contextual terms, the more deeply implausible the

¹¹⁴ Charles Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber* (London, Routledge, 1992) p.24.

¹¹⁵ Smith, *Realist Thought*, pp.27-28.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.* p.28.

¹¹⁷ The conference papers and discussion are reproduced in Otto Stammer (ed.), *Max Weber and Sociology Today* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1971).

¹¹⁸ *ibid.* pp.61-65.

'charge' (as it usually is) of 'positivism' becomes. To begin with, Weber entirely accepted Wilhelm Dilthey's division of *Naturwissenschaft*, the natural sciences, from *Geisteswissenschaft*, the humanities (for want of a precise translation). It seemed obvious to Dilthey that the sorts of universal generalisations and hypotheses which were possible in the natural sciences were impossible for human beings, self-reflective and infinite of variety. This fundamental epistemological distinction challenged positivist claims about the unity of method. Nature, Dilthey suggested, could be studied via causal explanation (*Erklären*), and the mental life characteristic of the humanities via understanding (*Verstehen*).¹¹⁹ Human beings as subjects simply cannot be 'known' in the same way that an object like a tree can be. Hence the meaning of social actions can only be gleaned on the basis of an empathetic reconstruction from 'the inside looking out' as it were rather than 'explained' from the 'outside looking in'.¹²⁰

This does not mean, for Weber drawing upon Dilthey and Rickert in opposition to Windelband, that particularity and contingency deny the possibility of any form of general claims about human actions and their meaning.¹²¹ Weber draws upon two mediating tools here. The first is that general concepts - social science categories - can be used to illuminate the behaviour of individuals. These 'ideal types' as Weber referred to them are fictitious constructs.¹²² There is no 'correspondence theory of truth' here, no

¹¹⁹ See Wilhelm Dilthey 'The Construction of the Historical World in the Human Studies' (excerpts) in H.P. Rickman (ed, trans.), *W.Dilthey Selected Writings* (Cambridge University Press, 1976) pp.170-245.

¹²⁰ For a much fuller treatment of these issues and their relevance for contemporary accounts of international politics see Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1990).

¹²¹ For a detailed description of this intellectual lineage see John Patrick Diggins, *Max Weber: Politics and the Spirit of Tragedy* (Basic Books, New York, 1996) pp.113-125.

¹²² "... it is convenient for the sociologist from time to time to employ average types of an empirical statistical character, concepts which do not require methodological discussion. But when reference is made to "typical" cases the term should always be understood, unless otherwise stated, as meaning *ideal* types, which may in turn be rational or irrational..." Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (3 volumes), Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich trans., (Bedminster Press, New York, 1968) Vol.1 p.22.

direct relationship between knowledge and its object. Weber is explicit on this point:

"In no case does [the theoretically conceived ideal type of subjective meaning] refer to an objectively "correct" meaning or one which is "true" in some metaphysical sense."¹²³

Secondly, the possibilities for moving beyond particularity are heightened by ascribing to human actions a sense of rationality, of purposiveness. Weber drew up a typology of 'social action' based around a four-fold distinction between behaviour which is:

- "1) instrumentally rational (*Zweckrational*), that is, determined by expectations as to the behaviour of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as "conditions" or "means" for the attainment of the actor's own rationally purposed and calculated ends;
- 2) value rational (*Wertrational*), that is, determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behaviour independently of its prospects of success;
- 3) affectual (especially emotional), that is, determined by the actor's specific affects and feeling states;
- 4) traditional, that is, determined by ingrained habituation."¹²⁴

The most important categories for Weber are those of value and instrumental rationality. Weber describes a pure value rational orientation as:

"...the actions of persons who, regardless of possible cost to themselves, act to put into practice their convictions of what seems to them to be required by duty, honour, the pursuit of beauty, a religious call, personal loyalty, or the importance of some "cause" no matter in what it consists."¹²⁵

Action can only be considered instrumentally rational:

¹²³ *ibid.* p.4.

¹²⁴ *ibid.* p.24.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* p.25.

"...when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of the relations of the end to the secondary consequences, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends. *Determination of action either in affectual or in traditional terms is thus incompatible with this type.*"¹²⁶(emphasis added)

This is important because Weber accepted that instrumental rationality was coming to define the predominant form of social action. Weber accepted Tönnies' distinction between communal (*vergemeinschaftung*) and associative (*vergesellschaftung*) forms of social relationship, between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, though he saw these as continuous rather than dichotomous social forms.¹²⁷ Even so it is clear that for Weber, as for Tönnies, *Gesellschaft* is increasingly coming to replace *Gemeinschaft*. In this, as in so many other respects, Weber was a quintessential modernist.

Irreligious from the age of fifteen, Weber, like Nietzsche, explored the problem of establishing meaningful foundations for human existence in a godless universe.¹²⁸ 'Meaning' was becoming increasingly problematic in a world dominated by the rise of capitalism and its highly specialised division of labour and attendant bureaucracy. Capitalism, originally part of a protestant ascetic which had as its end the service of God, had become secularised and the acquisition of wealth an end in itself rather than a means to a greater end. Capitalism had once been a light cloak which the 'saint' could set aside "... but fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage."¹²⁹ This 'iron cage' is reinforced by the ubiquity of bureaucracy:

¹²⁶ *ibid.* p.26.

¹²⁷ *ibid.* pp.40-46.

¹²⁸ On Weber's atheism see Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography* trans. H.Zehn, (Wiley, New York, 1975) p.57.

¹²⁹ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons, (Allen and Unwin, London, 1930). Charles Turner suggests that Weber may have drawn this metaphor from his reading of Nietzsche. Turner, *Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber*, p.142

"The development of modern forms of organisation in all fields is nothing less than identical with the development and continual spread of bureaucratic administration. This is true of church and state, of armies, political parties, economic enterprises, interest groups, endowments, clubs, and many others."¹³⁰

Bureaucracy is not, of course, an invention of modernity "[b]ut no country and no age has ever experienced, in the same sense as the modern Occident, the absolute and complete dependence of its whole existence, of the political, technical, and economic conditions of its life, on a specially trained organisation of officials."¹³¹ Bureaucracy is far more persistent and 'escape-proof' in its connection with rational specialisation than "other historical agencies of the modern rational order of life."¹³²

This form of modern organisation tends to produce social action based upon the exercise of instrumental rationality. In one sense this is a welcome development for Weber because he is sympathetic towards forms of ethical practice which concern themselves with means-ends balancing and the assessment of consequences. As we shall see later, Weber wishes to juxtapose a consequentialist 'ethic of responsibility' against an 'ethic of conviction'. The difficulty is that the last element in Weber's description of instrumental rationality, the weighing up of 'the relative importance of different possible ends', has become deeply problematic for human beings as mere cogs in a highly specialised division of labour. This is modernity's paradoxical twist: the advance of rational forms of social organisation problematises the rational contemplation of substantive values. As I have already suggested in at least one reading this is where Weber's vision ends with humanity locked into an

¹³⁰ Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 1 p.223.

¹³¹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p.16.

¹³² Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 3 p.1401.

'iron cage' of marxian alienation and a kind of grim fatalism. Did Weber offer us any alternatives to the 'disenchantment of the world' ?¹³³

In this conflict of the "requirement of meaningfulness" with "the empirical realities of the world" there was always the possibility of the 'escape' from modernity through the rejection of politics and the political sphere.¹³⁴ 'Escape', Weber suggested, could manifest itself in a number of different forms: mysticism, an ethic of "absolute goodness", the "irrationalities of non-religious emotionalism, above all eroticism", or in "a world-fleeing romanticism" like "the flight to the people" (e.g. socialism and Tolstoy's worship of the peasantry) or Rousseau's retreat to a mythical nature uncorrupted by society.¹³⁵ The intellectual was confronted with this dilemma in a particularly acute form for two reasons, the first due to a natural tendency to "conceive of the world as a problem of meaning" and the second because of the intellectual's position of relative detachment from the 'iron cage' of the modern division of labour.¹³⁶ In the Germany of Weber's time the escape of the intellectual was increasingly taking the form of the bellicose hypernationalism discussed earlier. The chief culprit from Weber's perspective was Heinrich von Treitschke whom he condemned for "...politiciz[ing] his students, fill[ing] them with enthusiasm for Bismarck and the Hohenzollern dynasty, and stirr[ing] up anti-Semitism among them."¹³⁷

This brings us back to the original point about the charge of 'positivism' because it enables us to grasp Weber's repeated calls for 'value-neutrality' and 'objectivity' in the intellectual sphere. Instead of seeing this as some sort of universal methodological precept it may make better sense for us

¹³³ Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', in *From Max Weber*, H.H Gerth, C.Wright Mills (ed,trans.), (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1948) p.155.

¹³⁴ Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 2 p.506.

¹³⁵ *ibid.* pp.506, 601.

¹³⁶ Weber would not, however, have accepted the stronger Mannheimian treatment of intellectuals as 'free-floating' agents.

¹³⁷ Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, p.119. Similarly, though Weber was impressed with the sheer artistry of Stefan George's poetry he was deeply critical of George's mystical aesthetic. See p.457.

to see it as a kind of rigorous ascetic, an ethical code of conduct for intellectuals.

Weber's call for value neutrality in the classroom did not extend to an intellectual's activities outside it and any discussion of Weber's own system of values leads us inevitably to 'the political' and international politics. However unpalatable it may be for some of his many admirers, there is no denying that Weber was a German nationalist who fully supported Germany's claims to dominance in Central Europe and a broader imperial role. This position was in many respects a natural extension of his understanding of the nature of political life. "All politics", Weber asserted, "is oriented to *raison d'état* and to the autonomous end of maintaining the external and internal distribution of power."¹³⁸ Furthermore "the prestige of power means in practice the glory of power over other communities; it means the expansion of power..."¹³⁹ More broadly, "violent social action is obviously something absolutely primordial. Every group, from the household to the political party, has always resorted to physical violence when it had to protect the interests of its members and was capable of doing so."¹⁴⁰

It is also true that there are moments in Weber when 'the political' goes beyond an ontological reality and assumes an almost existential importance. Hence the fact that "the individual is expected ultimately to face death in the group interest ... gives to the political community its particular pathos and raises its enduring emotional foundations."¹⁴¹ The clearest evidence of this element is to be found in his famous essay *Science as a Vocation* in which he wonders whether death has become meaningless for "the civilised man."¹⁴² Similarly, Marianne Weber reports a wartime outburst (admittedly made in 1914 rather than 1918!) in which Weber claimed that

¹³⁸ Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. 2, pp.600-601

¹³⁹ *ibid.* p.910.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.* pp.904-905. There is no suggestion of a Schmittian ethical dualism in Weber. He sees elements of struggle within even the most intimate of human relationships. See page 636.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.* p.903

¹⁴² 'Science as a Vocation', p.140.

"despite its hideousness this war is great and wonderful and worth experiencing."¹⁴³

An alternative portrait would distance Weber from both Schmitt and the extreme wing of German nationalism. When set contextually Weber's nationalism appears quite moderate. He sought - in vain - to moderate the fantastically ambitious annexationist plans that were being widely touted during the First World War. He pointed to the potential dangers posed by the mere "power politician" the "parvenu-like braggart with power."¹⁴⁴ Nor was Weber an uncritical worshipper of the *Maachstaat*. He warned against reified, organic understandings of the state.¹⁴⁵ Nothing better reflects Weber's ability to observe a critical detachment from German power politics than his condemnation of the 'unrestrained adulation' of Bismarck. Bismarck's domination of German politics, Weber suggested, robbed Germany of its ability to exercise political judgement, leaving "a nation accustomed to fatalistic sufferance of all decisions made in the name of monarchic government."¹⁴⁶

As Walker has pointed out, Weber's (and later Hans Morgenthau's) unease with a pure power politics led Weber to juxtapose a so-called 'ethics of responsibility' against both an ethics of absolute conviction and the instrumental calculation of means to fixed ends.¹⁴⁷ In this Weber was not only concerned with the extreme nationalism of the right but also with the politically irresponsible actions of the left. Bolsheviks and Spartacists, Weber suggested, exercise violence under the conviction that, as their ends were just, they were free to use any means at their disposal.¹⁴⁸ Such individuals were acting under the delusion that they could free themselves from the inherent

¹⁴³ Marianne Weber, *Max Weber*, p.522.

¹⁴⁴ Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', in *From Max Weber*, p.116.

¹⁴⁵ Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol.1 p.14.

¹⁴⁶ See Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol.3, pp.1385-1392.

¹⁴⁷ R.B.J. Walker, *Inside/Outside: international relations as political theory* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) p.32.

¹⁴⁸ Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', pp.119.

ethical ambiguity of political action, the tragedy that political life often amounted to a choice amongst relative evils:

"No ethics in the world can dodge the fact that in numerous instances the attainment of 'good' ends is bound to the fact that one must be willing to pay the price of using morally dubious means or at least dangerous ones - and facing the possibility or even the probability of evil ramifications. From no ethics in the world can it be concluded when and to what extent the ethically good purpose 'justifies' the ethically dangerous means and ramifications."¹⁴⁹
 "Diabolical forces", he warns us, are "lurking in all violence."¹⁵⁰

Though he initially establishes an ethic of absolute ends and an ethic of responsibility as irreconcilable opposites, by the end of the essay his position has become more ambiguous. It is, Weber suggests:

"immensely moving when a mature man ... acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere reaches the point where he says: 'here I stand; I can do no other.' ...And every one of us who is not spiritually dead must realise the possibility of finding himself at some time in that position. In so far as this is true, an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man - a man who *can* have the 'calling for politics'."¹⁵¹

In this potential meeting of instrumental and value rationality Weber at least tempers the grim fatalism of his reading of modernity but the space opened up for ethical conduct is both circumscribed and fraught with difficulties. Just as there is no rational way to determine what constitutes a responsible choice of ends there is, equally, no rational way to decide upon what constitutes a responsible choice of means. This relativism, this lack of solid foundations, presented a problem which has, as Walker has also pointed out, bedevilled much of the realist analysis of international politics, in its

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.* p. 121.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.* p.125-126.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.* p.127

'classical' vein at least.¹⁵² And certainly, his choice of end - the strengthening of the German nation state and its rightful place in world politics - in combination with his view of political life as 'tragic', offered little prospect for the amelioration of international conflict. Even setting aside, for the moment, the question of how to identify an ethics of responsibility, Weber was faced with the further task of specifying the sort of 'genuine man' suitable for politics and imbued with the appropriate combination of 'passion and perspective'.¹⁵³ The problem was that the modern division of labour had produced a type of bureaucratic man who lived *from* politics rather than *for* it.¹⁵⁴ Politics as a vocation had been replaced by politics as a profession.

Weber's antidote to bureaucracy was the irrationalism of 'charisma':¹⁵⁵ "There is the authority of the extraordinary and personal *gift of grace* (charisma), the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership. This is 'charismatic' domination, as exercised by the prophet or - in the field of politics - by the elected war lord, the plebiscitarian ruler, the great demagogue, or the political party leader."¹⁵⁶

Charismatic leaders have "emerged in all places and in all historical epochs" but modern bureaucracy was serving to stifle them.¹⁵⁷ Weber hoped that a fundamental reorganisation of German political institutions would help to counteract modern developments. In particular, he looked to a strong Reichstag and Prussian House of Representatives which would act as a counterweight to bureaucracy by encouraging, through competition for office,

¹⁵² Walker, *Inside/Outside*, p.58.

¹⁵³ Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', p.128. See also 'Politics as a Vocation', p.115.

¹⁵⁴ Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol. III p.1427. See also 'Politics as a Vocation', p.115.

¹⁵⁵ "The term "charisma" will be applied to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is considered extraordinary and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities." Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol.I, p.244.

¹⁵⁶ 'Politics as a Vocation' p.79.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid.* p.80.

the emergence of charismatic leaders who would control the masses in a 'plebiscitarian democracy' through the use of 'responsible demagoguery'.¹⁵⁸

The most immediate problem with this approach is obvious to anyone with an awareness of the subsequent course of German history for a 'charismatic demagogue' did indeed appear in the form of one Adolf Hitler who would, no doubt, have horrified Weber in every respect. And once again we have no formal criteria with which to assess what a 'responsible leader' should look like. Weber's own judgements offer little for us to develop upon. As Michael Joseph Smith has pointed out, Bismarck clearly possessed both charisma and a clear commitment to an ethics of responsibility but he was also found wanting by Weber.¹⁵⁹

Weber's wrestling with the antinomies, the perils, of modernity is important because so many intellectuals in International Relations were faced with the same dilemma: EH Carr, Raymond Aron and many others, above all, Hans Morgenthau. Morgenthau's attempt to come to terms with the Nietzschean/Weberian legacy will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter but I do, for the moment, wish to sketch an outline.

In considering Weber's broader contribution to realism Michael Joseph Smith points to five pertinent themes: 1) his definitions of the state and politics; 2) his conflictual understanding of the nature of international politics; 3) his nationalism; 4) his emphasis upon the cultivation of leadership; 5) his belief that statecraft needed to be informed by an ethics of responsibility.¹⁶⁰ The first of these is clear enough. In so far as realists have given much thought to the 'black box' of the state at all it is to Weber's definition of the state they have turned.¹⁶¹ Similarly, Weber's understanding of the nature of

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.103.

¹⁵⁹ Smith, *Realist Thought*, pp.51-52.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.* p.15.

¹⁶¹ "A compulsory political organization with continuous operations will be called a "state" insofar as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order." Weber, *Economy and Society*, Vol.I, p.54.

power has been widely accepted.¹⁶² That international politics is fundamentally conflictual is the *sin qua non* of realism.

Weber does, however, at least try to qualify any suggestion of a deterministic bias in his assessment of international politics. While "the prestige of power means in practice the glory of power over other communities..." and great powers are often expansive, they "...are not necessarily and not always oriented towards expansion."¹⁶³ Whether political structures will seek to project their power also incorporates, Weber suggests, "a specific internal dynamic".¹⁶⁴ This points towards a fundamental point of tension in Morgenthau's work, namely his apparent readiness to claim that power maximisation was a ubiquitous, natural phenomenon while at the same time attempting to reject more explicitly scientific treatments of international politics based on precisely this claim. In his treatment of statecraft he was, again, torn between free will and determinism, as we shall see in chapter two.¹⁶⁵

Turning to Weber's nationalism provides us with the clearest point of difference with Morgenthau. Morgenthau was, of course, aware that he was living through a period of world history in which the most virulent kind of nationalism was dominating the conduct of interstate politics. Under such circumstances the best that he felt possible for humanity was for the respective national interests to be pursued in a prudential way. He was nonetheless, and this is one of the least well appreciated aspects of Morgenthau, deeply cosmopolitan in his personal sympathies: hardly surprising in an émigré Jew excluded from the membership of his own nation. This profound paradox, this vast gap as Morgenthau saw it between is and

¹⁶² "In general, we understand by 'power' the chance of a man or men to realize their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action." *ibid.* Vol.II, p.926.

¹⁶³ *ibid.* pp.911-912.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.* p.910.

¹⁶⁵ This is hardly a dilemma unique to Morgenthau but his handling of it is, I will suggest in chapter two, deeply unconvincing.

ought, gave much of his work a pathos which, if anything, was even more pronounced than in Weber.

In terms of the fifth general point identified by Smith, Weber's ethics of responsibility was also an essential component of Morgenthau's outlook and his treatment of it will be explored in chapter two. Leadership and the rejuvenation of statecraft were of deep importance to Morgenthau and the problems he faced in articulating this vision within the context of modernity will also be considered in the next chapter.

Above all, Morgenthau accepted Weber's belief that the intellectual had a duty to engage in the public sphere and Weber's own example was a source of much inspiration. Though accepting the fundamental principle, both men struggled throughout their lives to determine precisely what form their involvement should take. Weber often toyed with the idea of a political career though he never actually served in any form of elected public office despite the fact that many of those in his closest circles, including his wife, did so and his involvement with professional organisations was always uncomfortable and mostly brief.¹⁶⁶ Morgenthau, too, flirted with the idea without ever bringing himself to pursue public office, elected or appointed, in the aggressive and self-promoting manner so often essential. Morgenthau, like Weber, was never entirely at ease in the spotlight of public and professional life.

A further parallel lies in the irony that while both men are known for their acceptance of power politics they also acted as powerful critics of their country's respective military adventures. Weber tried, in vain, to moderate German ambitions during World War One and he did not permit the death of his own brother in the fighting to cloud this judgement. Morgenthau became one of the leaders of the anti-Vietnam War movement at some personal cost: his conscripted son Matthew was victimised because of his father's activities

¹⁶⁶ Lawrence A. Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, pp.1-2.

and official forms of harassment included annual Internal Revenue audits of his taxation claims. Both men, as moderates, were misunderstood and mistrusted in their increasingly polarised societies. For *völkisch*, hyper-nationalist right-wingers Weber was an irrelevant 'nineteenth century man'.¹⁶⁷ For the left he was merely another reactionary. Similarly, Morgenthau's nuanced opposition based on an ethics of responsibility and a careful consideration of the national interest was largely unintelligible both to cold warriors and their radical left opponents. Above all, Morgenthau's Weberian emphasis on political life as the realm of tragedy proved, as we shall see in the next chapter, untranslatable in the very different environment of the United States.

Carl Schmitt: the Primacy of the Political

Carl Schmitt, like Weber, had a powerful influence upon Morgenthau who has suggested that his own doctoral dissertation was, in part, conceived as a reply to Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*.¹⁶⁸ Schmitt owes his status as one of the twentieth century's most infamous political thinkers to two factors, the foremost being the services he rendered to Nazism in the 1930s, most notably in the legal opinion he wrote in justification of Hitler's 'Blood Purge' of 1934. Schmitt's second claim to notoriety derives from his position as one of this century's most relentlessly ascerbic critics of both liberalism and political pluralism. I will return to both of these points.

In terms of Schmitt's general background there are, I would suggest, some similarities with Morgenthau. Schmitt, born in 1888, grew up as part of the Catholic minority of the Rhineland, which had been incorporated into Protestant Prussia in 1815. The tensions which arose as a part of this

¹⁶⁷ Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism* (Princeton University Press, 1957) p.115.

¹⁶⁸ Morgenthau, 'Fragment' p.15. Morgenthau's contention that this influence was both 'negative and temporary' may serve to understate the importance of the connection.

minority's resistance to Prussian assimilation are, if not of quite the same magnitude, at least similar to those experienced by the young Hans Morgenthau as a member of the Jewish minority. In both cases there was an exposure to social conflict during their formative years. Schmitt too clashed with his father over his educational path. The bourgeois expectations of Schmitt's father would, it appears, have denied him a university education altogether in favour of more 'practical training'.¹⁶⁹ Schmitt, likewise, came to the study of law despite a greater interest in the humanities, though in his case it doesn't appear to have been at parental behest. Schmitt also came to supplement his legal studies with a political and sociological awareness; indeed he participated in what must have been the last of the seminars given by Max Weber at Munich before his death.¹⁷⁰

With respect to specific intellectual content, Schmitt is perhaps best known for the stark extremity of his conception that the essence of the truly political lies in the antithesis of friend and enemy:

"The Political is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping."¹⁷¹

The State, in turn, can only be considered sovereign to the extent to which "...it is the decisive entity for the friend-or-enemy grouping...[o]therwise the political entity is nonexistent."¹⁷² It should be readily apparent that this represented a challenge to contemporaneous liberal and pluralist conceptions.

For Schmitt liberalism can only offer the negation of the political, it can never on its own produce "a positive theory of state, government, and politics...There exists a liberal policy of trade, church, and education, but

¹⁶⁹ Joseph W. Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton University Press, 1983) p.7.

¹⁷⁰ *ibid.* p.35.

¹⁷¹ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, G.Schwab trans., (Rutgers University Press, 1976) p.29. "...every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings according to friend and enemy..." p.37.

¹⁷² *ibid.* p.39.

absolutely no liberal politics, only a liberal critique of politics."¹⁷³ He makes similar criticisms of Cole and Laski's "so-called theory of Pluralism."¹⁷⁴ Schmitt accepts that individuals may have commitments to a wide variety of social entities and institutions. He also concurs with Laski's historical example of Bismarck's unsuccessful challenge to the Catholic Church in Germany (the so-called '*Kulturkampf*') as evidence that the State can be frustrated by a rival organisation. This, nevertheless, does not mean that the State is merely one kind of organisation in competition with others. Schmitt again reasserts the primacy of the political: under no circumstances could the Catholic Church or any other organisation have forbidden or prevented the German Reich under Bismarck from going to war. Pluralism, like liberalism, has no way to account for this quintessentially political feature, nor can it provide an adequate theory of the State which is reduced in liberal thought, Schmitt contemptuously suggests, to "...a revocable service for individuals and their free associations."¹⁷⁵ This reiterates a long-standing German objection to contractarian understandings of the State.

All these objections would be irrelevant if the political - the antithesis of friend and enemy - had ceased to be of importance. Schmitt dismissed this possibility out of hand: "...rationally speaking, it cannot be denied that nations continue to group themselves according to the friend and enemy antithesis, that the distinction still remains actual today, and that this is an ever present possibility for every people existing in the political sphere."¹⁷⁶ A broader anthropological pessimism reinforces this temporal assessment.¹⁷⁷

Liberal efforts to evade the political are either positively dangerous or they, more frequently, lead to the most ridiculous conceits. Hence the

¹⁷³ *ibid.* p.70.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* p.40. George Schwab suggests that Schmitt was the first individual in Germany to draw attention to 'the Anglo-Saxon theory of Pluralism.'

¹⁷⁵ *ibid.* pp.41-45

¹⁷⁶ *op.cit.* p.28.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.* pp.55-60, 64. See also Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt*, pp.87-88

Kellogg-Briand Treaty of 1928, reputedly agreed for the purpose of outlawing war, allowed a voluminous list of exceptions to this general commitment.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, with clear reference to the First World War, the 'war to end all wars', Schmitt asserts that "it is manifest fraud to condemn war as homicide, and then demand of men that they wage war, kill and be killed, so that there will never again be war."¹⁷⁹ Indeed, Schmitt believes that war simply cannot be justified by reference to any ethical or juristic norms:

"War, the readiness of combatants to die, the physical killing of human beings who belong to the side of the enemy - all this has ... existential meaning only ... There exists no rational purpose, no norm no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social ideal no matter how beautiful, no legitimacy nor legality which could justify men killing each other. If such physical destruction of human life is not motivated by an existential threat ... it cannot be justified."¹⁸⁰

It follows that any notion of 'Just War' is at best a hollow delusion, at worst a cynical form of subterfuge. Moral convictions are of necessity a feature of private life outside the amoral sphere of the political.

Assigning Schmitt a political label is problematic. Bendersky's suggestion of 'conservative' has a certain plausibility. Schmitt shared the familiar German antipathy towards modernisation and was concerned that mass democratic forms were breaking down the distinction between state and society and leading to the rise of 'total' states.¹⁸¹ At the same time Schmitt was by no means axiomatically hostile to modern intellectual and cultural trends, indeed he took a keen interest in the 'expressionist' movement in art.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ "...England's national honor, self-defense, the League Covenant and Locarno, welfare and territorial integrity of territories such as Egypt, Palestine and so forth; for France: self-defense, observance of the Kellogg Pact; for Poland: self-defense, observance of the Kellogg Pact, the League Covenant..." Schmitt, *ibid.* p.50.

¹⁷⁹ *ibid.* p.48

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.* pp.48-49.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.* pp.24,69.

¹⁸² Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt*, p.58.

Moreover, most German conservatives who remained uncontaminated by völkisch sympathies had no real enthusiasm for Hitler's regime. Relatively few of them leapt into Nazi service with the kind of enthusiasm shown by Schmitt. It is, nonetheless, difficult to attach völkisch sympathies to Schmitt. It may be possible to link Schmitt with that group of Germans who glorified war as an end in itself, though both Schmitt himself and other commentators have rejected this suggestion.¹⁸³ Leo Strauss, to the contrary, claims to have detected an existential commitment to the political, to the friend-enemy antithesis:

"...[Schmitt] affirms the political because he realizes that when the political is threatened, the seriousness of life is threatened. The affirmation of the political is in the last analysis nothing other than the affirmation of the moral."¹⁸⁴

If true this would, of course, link Schmitt with a particularly unattractive group of thinkers. In the absence of any direct confirmation we will have to leave the question open, but the suspicion remains.

The most plausible intellectual link may well be with Thomas Hobbes, a connection made by a number of authors and by Schmitt himself who is open in his admiration for Hobbes. As Strauss notes, Hobbes's state of war of individuals can in certain respects be considered akin to Schmitt's state of war of groups though Schmitt lacked any trace of Hobbes' liberal sympathies.¹⁸⁵ Schmitt invoked Hobbes directly in confirming that it was also his task "...to instill in man once again the mutual relation between Protection and Obedience..."¹⁸⁶

This combination of an allegedly Hobbesian world-view and a strict ethical dualism precisely represents the position that Morgenthau was often

¹⁸³ *ibid* pp.89-90 and see also Schwab, 'Introduction' to Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, p.7.

¹⁸⁴ Leo Strauss, 'Comments on Carl Schmitt's *Der Begriff des Politischen*', in Schmitt, *ibid.* p.99

¹⁸⁵ Strauss, *ibid.* pp.88-89

¹⁸⁶ Schmitt, *Concept of the Political*, p.7.

accused of subscribing to and spent much of life denying - not always successfully. A *Times Literary Supplement* review of Morgenthau's *In Defense of the National Interest* concluded that his 'doctrine' was "too near to that propounded in the 1930s by Carl Schmitt and other Nazi intellectuals..."¹⁸⁷

Morgenthau was exposed to Schmitt in the early 1920s and has claimed that his doctoral dissertation was, at least in part, conceived as a reply to Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political* (referred to by Morgenthau as 'The Concept of Politics').¹⁸⁸ Morgenthau received a letter from Schmitt complimenting him on the quality of his research and Morgenthau requested a meeting in person. He claims to have left the meeting thinking to himself that "now I have met the most evil man alive." This conclusion seems rather implausible on the basis of Morgenthau's written account which suggests nothing more than that Schmitt was a vain, aloof man lacking in personal warmth; hardly unique characteristics in a German intellectual of the period and hardly a sufficient basis to sustain the claim that Schmitt was evil incarnate.¹⁸⁹

We should, perhaps, understand this passage as Morgenthau's attempt to distance himself from Schmitt in front of a contemporary audience. It should not, however, be seen as some sort of cynical rhetorical strategy as one critic has implied.¹⁹⁰ Morgenthau's desire to distance himself from what

¹⁸⁷ 'Diplomacy and the National Interest', *Times Literary Supplement*, Friday, May 9, 1952, p.310.

¹⁸⁸ Morgenthau, 'Fragment', p.15. Morgenthau claims that Schmitt made adjustments to the second edition of *The Concept of the Political* on the basis of Morgenthau's critique without acknowledging so explicitly. Ironically, Morgenthau attacked Schmitt's universal understanding of the political on particularist grounds, precisely the same criticism that was to be levelled at Morgenthau and other post-war realists. ie "...la doctrine de Schmitt est une metaphysique qui ne fait appel que de tres loin a la realite historique et psychologique... elle n'est pas donnee une fois pour toutes et n'est pas necessairement attachee, comme telle, a la notion meme de certains objets determines. Elle est au contraire relative, comme toute condition est toujours relative au but poursuivi." Morgenthau, *La notion du "politique" et la theorie des differends internationaux* pp.46,49 quoted in Honig, 'Totalitarianism and Realism' p.301. The translation runs something like the following: "Schmitt's doctrine is a metaphysics that resorts to historical and psychological reality only from afar... It is not given once and for all, and is not necessarily linked, as such, to the very notion of certain determined objects. On the contrary, it is relative, just as any condition is always relative to the pursued goal."

¹⁸⁹ Morgenthau, 'Fragment', pp.15-16.

¹⁹⁰ "...this strongly negative judgement [of Schmitt by Morgenthau] is most certainly conditioned by Morgenthau's attempt to distance himself from German acquaintances that had been involved with the Nazi regime." Pichler, 'Godfathers of Truth', p.192.

Schmitt came to represent in the post World War Two period was both genuine and understandable. Nevertheless one cannot help but wonder whether Morgenthau saw in Schmitt a pale reflection of himself, of unpleasant realities pertaining to the human condition which he wished desperately to deny.

There is undeniably a substantial amount of intellectual kinship between the two. Morgenthau's critique of liberalism/idealism will be considered in the following chapter. For the moment it suffices to say that both pointed out the ways in which liberalism had obscured the centrality of power and the political. In this exposure of the conceits and illusions of liberalism they joined with much of the German intelligentsia. More broadly, they can be linked with that host of unmaskers who challenged bourgeois complacency with threatening 'realities': from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic tunnellings beneath the bourgeois facade to Charles Darwin's challenge to creationism and Friedrich Nietzsche's announcement of 'the Death of God'. Morgenthau, too, shared Schmitt's anthropological pessimism as he was to make plain in *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics*, his first book to be published in the United States.

In other respects, however, there were important differences. Schmitt's amorality was anathema to Morgenthau who remained an individual of deep ethical instincts convinced of the urgent need for the restoration of at least some minimal normative standards for the conduct of international politics. Morgenthau lamented that the shared norms, the commitment to certain 'rules of the game' that had informed the classic age of nineteenth century diplomacy had given way to the passionate, manichean destructiveness of twentieth century international politics. This in itself was not unique as it was analogous, Morgenthau suggested, to the hatreds that informed the pre-Westphalian religious wars of the seventeenth century. There was one important difference however: mankind's unprecedented

technological capacity for destruction. In *The Concept of the Political*, first published in 1932, Schmitt claimed that the fight for existence, the struggle of the political, had "primacy over the technical means by which the battle will be waged..."¹⁹¹ Fifteen years later the splitting of the atom and the construction - and use - of nuclear weapons had served to shatter this Schmittian axiom. Morgenthau's fears of nuclear cataclysm were central to his life and work in the United States. In a letter written near the end of his life he re-affirmed that the danger posed by nuclear weaponry represented "the overriding ethical issue of our time."¹⁹² We shall see in chapter three how Morgenthau attacked the efforts of Herman Kahn and others to re-establish a Clausewitzian rationale for the conduct of nuclear war.

It is precisely in his awareness that technological change had presented mankind with unique dilemmas that Morgenthau was at his most modernistic. Nor could Morgenthau, faced with the prospect of nuclear annihilation, fall back upon a religious faith as did so-called 'Christian Realists' like Reinhold Niebuhr and Herbert Butterfield. Man, alone in the universe, had no refuge from the peril of nuclear cataclysm. It is this threat that fed so directly into Morgenthau's sense of pathos and tragedy that was largely absent in the environment of his new home, the United States.

It is when we turn to Morgenthau's consistently advocated solution to the problems of international politics in the modern age - the revival of diplomacy - that the 'Morgenthau as modernist' thesis is at its weakest. One could well make the claim that diplomacy was a form of social dialogue that reached its apogee in the nineteenth century and was made redundant by the mass-based politics of the twentieth century. If so, calls for its renewal could be held to be representative of a hopelessly anachronistic conservatism as, indeed, one critic of Morgenthau has suggested.¹⁹³ The dialectic of diplomacy

¹⁹¹ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p.46

¹⁹² Letter to Philip A. Johnson, President, Council on Religion and International Affairs, Oct.2 1978, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 13.

¹⁹³ Griffiths, *Realism, Idealism and International Politics*.

and modernity in the American context will be pursued at greater length in chapter three.

Perhaps the most striking difference between Schmitt and Morgenthau lay in their very different approaches to the role of the intellectual in the political sphere. While respecting Schmitt's intellectual capacity, Morgenthau doubted "...whether any surpassed him in lack of principle and servility to his Nazi masters."¹⁹⁴ As has already been suggested, Schmitt is perhaps best known for his collaboration with Nazism in the 1930s. In May 1933, after a period of vacillation, Schmitt became a party member and shortly after declared the one-party state to be "the state of the twentieth century."¹⁹⁵ In November he was appointed to head the University Teachers' Group of the National Socialist League of German Universities.¹⁹⁶ In a new 1933 edition of *The Concept of the Political* Schmitt removed references to Karl Marx and Georg Lukacs to render the work more acceptable to Nazi tastes. And, for the first time, elements of anti-Semitism began to appear in Schmitt's writing.¹⁹⁷ His most notorious intervention came in response to 'the Night of the Long Knives'. Hitler's 'Blood Purge' of SA ('Brownshirt') leaders and other perceived opponents of the regime included Kurt von Schleicher for whom Schmitt had earlier acted as an adviser. A few weeks later Schmitt published an article entitled '*Der Führer Schützt das Recht*' (The Führer Protects the Law) which defended the legality of Hitler's actions.

Even while placing his intellect at the service of the Nazis, Schmitt couldn't help but reveal glimpses of political positions previously held but now unacceptable to Nazism. For instance, in a 1933 pamphlet *Staat, Bewegung, Volk* (State, Movement, People) Schmitt had proposed a

¹⁹⁴ Morgenthau, 'Fragment', p.15. Though even in his respect for Schmitt's intellect he was by no means an uncritical admirer. In a letter to Hannah Arendt Morgenthau described Schmitt's later work *Theories des Partisanen* as "...interesting but unbelievably shoddy, both in thought and exposition." *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 6.

¹⁹⁵ Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt*, pp.204-206.

¹⁹⁶ *ibid.* p.206.

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.* pp.207-208

constitutional scheme based on the tripartite separation of these elements. This reflected an older conservative desire to separate state, party, and society which was anathema to Nazi ideologues for whom all of these elements were merely subordinate to the great all-embracing *Völk*. A Munich law professor charged Schmitt with attempting to mould National Socialism into a 'neo-Hegelian' framework with the state at its political apex: a model entirely at odds with the holistic National Socialist concept of *Volksgemeinschaft* (racial community).¹⁹⁸

This sort of sniping gathered momentum over the next three years in spite of Schmitt's support for the Nuremberg Laws and ever more frequent and strident outbursts of anti-Semitism. In 1936 Schmitt even felt able to accept that, far from being an agent of the state as he had previously held, the Führer was indeed "...the highest judge of the nation and the highest lawgiver."¹⁹⁹ The State was subordinate to both party and race. Most of these efforts of abasement were in vain as they only served to further goad Schmitt's critics, those 'true believers' in National Socialism who remembered Schmitt's earlier political inconsistencies and his role as an adviser to various Weimar governments and dismissed him as a mere political mercenary. The continuing sympathies of Göring and Hans Frank afforded a degree of relative protection but he was, nevertheless, obliged to retreat from public life in 1936. As with so many other German intellectuals Schmitt very carefully turned to areas of scholarship unlikely to attract any official attention.²⁰⁰

The Betrayal of the Intellectuals

Schmitt's case serves in many ways as a parable for the intellectual in Germany as a whole. The reader will recall that by the end of the nineteenth

¹⁹⁸ See the discussion in Bendarsky, *Carl Schmitt*, pp.210-212; 221-222.

¹⁹⁹ *ibid.* p.231.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.* p.243.

century an overwhelming majority of German intellectuals were of illiberal and antipolitical tendencies. The worship of state power was ubiquitous and German intellectuals had been fervent supporters of German territorial expansion during World War I. All these elements were brought together in a common antipathy for the Weimar Republic. Oswald Spengler, 'Nietzsche's Ape' in Thomas Mann's memorably ascerbic description, thought that parliamentary government was another symptom of Western decadence and in the early 1920s he was actively involved in various rightist plots to overthrow democratic government.²⁰¹ Edgar Jung plotted the rise of a new nobility in defiance of "that political plague of the Western World", the notion of human equality and its democratic derivatives.²⁰² Many intellectuals including the mystical poet Stefan George abandoned the public sphere altogether. George's poetry was deliberately constructed in such a way as to make it unsuitable for mass appreciation.²⁰³ One of the most damning criticisms which can be levelled against the Frankfurt School is that the Nazis, upon obtaining power, made no effort to arrest any of its members concluding that the esoteric and often incomprehensible publications of Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin et al could be safely ignored.²⁰⁴ Hannah Arendt, much to her later regret, was one of those who rejected any involvement with the politics of the democratic republic.²⁰⁵

At the other extreme the worship of the *Machtstaat* reached a pinnacle in the work of Ernst Jünger. His 1932 book *Der Arbeiter* (The Worker) called for the emergence of a German society committed to a permanent mobilisation for Total War based around a tripartite social division of 'warriors', workers, and an authoritarian elite.²⁰⁶ Jünger, above all, personified

²⁰¹ A useful summary of Spengler's activities in Weimar Germany can be found in Struve, *Elites Against Democracy*, pp.232-273. See also Alastair Hamilton, *The Appeal of Fascism* (Anthony Blond Ltd. 1971) pp.110-118; Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism*, pp.170-179.

²⁰² Struve, *Elites*, p.327.

²⁰³ *ibid.* p.45.

²⁰⁴ Laquer, *Weimar*, pp.63-64.

²⁰⁵ Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (Secker and Warburg, London, 1969) p.75.

²⁰⁶ Struve, *Elites*, pp.377-378.

the rejection of the Enlightenment's faith in reason and the value of education. He once complained that universal education was responsible for robbing Germany of "a sound reserve of illiterates."²⁰⁷

If only a minority of German intellectuals were direct participants in the undermining of Weimar, many of their colleagues urged them on from the sidelines and exhorted their students to do likewise. In Hitler and Nazism most of them got both rather less - and more - than they had bargained for. A grubby, vulgar little Austrian corporal was, after all, hardly in the image of the great charismatic leader - the *Übermensch* - they had longed for. The second unpleasant surprise was that Hitler, with few exceptions, treated intellectuals with complete contempt and Nazism had little use for them once the initial phase of regime consolidation was completed.²⁰⁸

The fate of the four German intellectuals discussed in this section is instructive. Carl Schmitt, as we have seen, was forced into the state of 'inner emigration'. Oswald Spengler, too, found that his more orthodox brand of German conservatism was offended by the crude excesses of Nazism. His form of 'inner migration' involved a retreat to prehistorical studies.²⁰⁹ The in many ways rather urbane Ernst Jünger, offended by Hitler's sheer vulgarity, published a novel in 1939 which amounted to a thinly veiled condemnation of Nazism.²¹⁰ Hitler, displaying unusual restraint on this occasion, put Jünger into a *Wehrmacht* uniform and sent him to war in France.²¹¹ Edgar Jung was less fortunate. Jung had, like so many other German conservatives, an instinctive fear of Nazism's cultivation and cooption of the masses and he considered Hitler himself to be little more than a crude demagogue. In June 1934 Jung wrote a speech for his patron, the vice-chancellor Fritz von Papen,

²⁰⁷ *ibid.* p.405.

²⁰⁸ The grim fate of the Strasser brothers, who dared to take the 'Socialism' in 'National Socialism' seriously, is instructive in this respect.

²⁰⁹ Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism*, pp.206-209.

²¹⁰ Struve, *Elites*, pp.412-414.

²¹¹ Jünger survived World War Two and lived to the ripe old age of 102 whilst never retracting nor apologising for any of his extreme positions.

which was highly critical of the course of the Nazi Revolution. A few days later he paid for his temerity by becoming another of the victims of Hitler's 'Blood Purge'.²¹²

Having observed this calamity unfolding in Europe in the late 1930s, Morgenthau took with him to the United States a very different perception of the role of the intellectual: a Weberian commitment to neither shirk political obligations nor to become identified with authority but rather to speak 'truth to power'. It comes as no surprise to learn that one of the first articles that Morgenthau wrote in the United States was given the title *The Escape from Power in the Western World* in which, like Weber, he challenged his fellow men to stare into the abyss without blinking:

"Let us then face bravely the lust for power and power politics in all their threatening ugliness as the immutable elements of human life in a political society."²¹³

The transmission and reception of this message from Old World to New will be the subject of chapters two and three.

²¹² Struve, *Elites*, pp.349-352.

²¹³ 'The Escape from Power', p.9.

Chapter Two: The American Science of Politics

"Over there the romance of numbers rules the soul, and a strong hope in the future lies in every American" (Max Weber).

"When you cannot measure, your knowledge is meagre and unsatisfactory" (Motto inscribed on the Social Science Research Building at the University of Chicago).

Unlike many other Europeans, Hans Morgenthau's emigration to the United States was not the culmination of long-held desires or plans. He had initially left Germany in 1933 for a position in the law school at the University of Geneva, having already been rejected by the University of Frankfurt on the grounds of his Jewishness.¹ Here too, he claims to have been badly treated at the hands of anti-Semites on the faculty, in addition to having been monitored by certain of his own students whom he suspected of reporting to the Gestapo. His increasing scepticism toward the Briand-Kellogg Pact and the League of Nations was, he suggests, another factor contributing towards his unpopularity.²

He left Geneva in 1935 in order to take up a position at the Institute for International and Economic Studies in Madrid not long, of course, prior to the eruption of the Spanish Civil War. Having lost his home and the rest of his property in the fighting and fearing that a Second World War was now inevitable, he made the decision to leave Continental Europe altogether. Even now, however, the United States was by no means a first choice. Though not mentioned in his interview with Bernard Johnson, material in his collection of

¹ Johnson, 'Interview', p.352.

² *ibid.* pp.353-355.

papers suggests that he applied - and was rejected - for admission to England through the sponsorship of the Academic Assistance Council. In hindsight this was probably fortuitous for Morgenthau. The highly stratified, class-ridden England of the late 1930s is unlikely to have afforded him the opportunities that he was able to take advantage of in America.

Obtaining a visa for the United States was itself no easy matter given that "a number of American consuls were notoriously anti-Semitic and as a matter of principle they simply did not give visas to Jews at all..."³ The permission to enter the United States was finally secured through a sympathetic junior employee of the United States consulate in Geneva who encouraged Morgenthau to apply at a time when the more amenable vice-consul would be acting for his holidaying superior.

He arrived in the United States with his wife Irma in July 1937 and as an intellectual arriving during the Depression with only a smattering of English he predictably found the going tough. At an initial interview with an employment agency in New York specifically devoted to placing academics, Morgenthau was informed that there was a surfeit of individuals with his sort of background and that he would be better off taking a job as "an elevator boy"(!)⁴ With his wife employed in a department store and the couple living in squalid accommodation he eventually found some temporary teaching at Brooklyn College.⁵

Frustrated with their life in New York, Hans was desperate enough to accept a position offered through another employment agency at the seemingly unlikely institution of the University of Kansas City. One can only begin to imagine the cultural shock for a cosmopolitan European arriving in

³ *ibid.* p. 362

⁴ L.Fermi, *Illustrious Immigrants: The Intellectual Migration From Europe 1930-1941* (2nd ed.), (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1971) p.28.

⁵ With his natural facility for languages, and with the encouragement and assistance of his pupils at Brooklyn, he seems to have acquired English very rapidly. See *ibid.* p.29.

the mid-West in the 1930s. Morgenthau has, indeed, referred to the Kansas of the time as "...a kind of overgrown cow town."⁶

His teaching commitments were heavy and involved "just about everything under the sun" including administrative law, constitutional law, American government, political theory and comparative government. Considering himself to be exploited as little more than a form of cheap labour Morgenthau continued to explore other options including qualifying for the Missouri Bar. He also applied to, and was rejected by, both the army and the navy.⁷ This unsatisfactory state of affairs was, however, transformed in 1943 when Morgenthau was appointed to the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago as a temporary placement for Quincy Wright who had been seconded to Washington.⁸

That Morgenthau ended up in Chicago is no small irony given that Chicago made as large a contribution as any towards making a science of the study of politics. It is hardly surprising that Morgenthau clashed both intellectually and personally with a number of his colleagues. He arrived to find that there was already great friction between the department and the university President Robert Hutchins, a neo-Thomist who shared Morgenthau's distaste for the 'science of politics'. Morgenthau claims that shortly after arriving he was called into Hutchins' office and informed, in no uncertain terms, of Hutchins' contempt for Leonard White and many other members of the department.⁹ White has been described by Morgenthau as the 'front man' for Charles Merriam who, as we shall see later in the chapter, was the driving force behind the Chicago school of politics. Merriam had formally retired in 1943 but continued to exert a strong influence indirectly.¹⁰

⁶ Johnson, 'Interview with Hans Morgenthau', p.369.

⁷ See his letter to Professor C. Jessup, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 31.

⁸ *ibid.* pp.368-69.

⁹ Johnson, 'Interview', p.370.

¹⁰ In a letter written some years later, Morgenthau referred to Merriam's 'demoniac lust for power'. See his letter to Professor Lindsay Rogers, July 20, 1964, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 50.

Morgenthau's scepticism about the potential for science and reason to transform politics ran against almost everything Merriam had believed in and campaigned for during his life and he was quick to register his displeasure at Morgenthau's arrival. As a remedial measure he recommended that Morgenthau teach some courses in administrative law!¹¹ This helped to establish a permanent tension between Morgenthau and Merriam's acolytes in the department; a line of tension which appears to have become something of a schism with the later arrival of Leo Strauss who further marked a division between a humanistic wing and a science of politics group.¹² As has been remarked elsewhere, it was a great irony that just as the type of political science developed in Chicago was becoming dominant nationally, it was being challenged in Chicago itself. It has come to be widely thought within International Relations that this dispute was to do little more than methodology but I will show later in the chapter that it actually had much deeper roots and ramifications.

By the early 1950s then, Morgenthau had some sympathetic allies at Chicago, but he was very isolated in the mid-1940s and it is hardly surprising that his first book, *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics*, did not fit the prevailing intellectual milieu. Most of the book had already been written during his time

¹¹ Kenneth Thompson, *Schools of Thought in International Relations: interpreters, issues, and morality* (Louisiana State University Press, 1996) p.23.

¹² He always remained on good terms with Quincy Wright, though. See Kenneth Thompson, 'Philosophy and Politics: The Two Commitments of Hans J. Morgenthau', in Robert Myers and Kenneth Thompson (eds.), *Truth and Tragedy* (Transaction Books, New York, 1984). A man he didn't enjoy a close relationship with was Morten Kaplan. To what extent this was the product of intellectual or personal disagreements is unclear but it was probably a combination of the two. Morgenthau once complained, in a letter written in opposition to Kaplan's prospective tenure at Chicago that "Kaplan was using the classroom for personal and professional attacks on me" and he added that he couldn't "visualise our simultaneous membership in the same Department for any length of time." Letter to Professor C. Herman Pritchett, November 18, 1960, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 74. For more on the Morgenthau-Kaplan dispute see the letter from Morgenthau to Dean Chauncey Harris (which opposed Kaplan's proposal to re-establish a separate programme in International Relations) of November 12, 1958, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 74. Also see the letter to Pritchett of December 2, 1960, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 74. In the end, Morgenthau remained in the department despite failing to prevent Kaplan's tenured appointment. See the letter from D. Gale Johnson, Dean, Division of Social Sciences, April 14, 1961, which records his pleasure at Morgenthau's decision to remain at Chicago. *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 84.

at Kansas and tested in the form of a number of journal articles which subsequently formed the core of the work: a pattern that Morgenthau was to repeat in every subsequent publication.¹³

Scientific Man Vs Power Politics

Scientific Man is undoubtedly Morgenthau's most cogent work. It is, above all, a polemic against the rational scientific liberalism of the nineteenth century that Morgenthau blames for the decay of both political thought and action in the West.¹⁴ Continuing to place our faith in the powers of reason is no longer tenable given the experiences of two World Wars and the rise of Nazism. We are deluded if we try to convince ourselves that fascism was "...a mere temporary retrogression into irrationality, an atavistic revival of autocratic and barbaric rule. In its mastery of the technological potentialities of the age it is truly progressive..." In this respect the propaganda machine of Goebbels and the gas chambers of Himmler are "models of technical [or instrumental] rationality."¹⁵ They represent the ultimate mockery of the belief in science and technological advance. He calls for a re-examination of the political problems of the age in light of the "pre-rationalist Western tradition" beginning with "the assumption that power politics, rooted in the lust for power which is common to all men ... is ... inseparable from social life itself."¹⁶

Though, strictly speaking, there is little in *Scientific Man* that can be ascribed to Morgenthau as an original insight, its importance lies in the transmission of the German critique of liberalism to the United States: as such

¹³ See for example 'The Limitations of Science and the Problem of Social Planning', *Ethics*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, (April 1944) pp.174-185; 'The Scientific Solution of Social Conflicts', in L.Bryson, L.Finkelstein & R.Maciver (eds.) *Approaches to Unity* (Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion in their relation to the Democratic way of life: fifth symposium, New York, 1945) pp.419-443.

¹⁴ For another challenge to scientism see Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1952).

¹⁵ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, p.6.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p.9.

it amounts to an effective synthesis of the work of Nietzsche, Weber, Schmitt and Mannheim et al. Much of this critique of liberalism will be familiar to the reader from the discussion in the previous chapter but I think it is worth presenting here again at greater length and viewed through Morgenthau's individual filter.

The roots of the liberal "repudiation of politics" are to be located, Morgenthau suggests, in the successful struggle of the rising middle classes against aristocratic opposition. By falsely conflating "...the general aspiration for power over man, which is the essence of politics" with the particular historical manifestation of aristocratic domination, liberalism came to identify the "opposition to aristocratic politics with hostility against any kind of politics..." This delusion was further strengthened by the more subtle means by which the victors exercised their own authority through "a system of indirect domination which replaced the military method of open violence with the invisible chains of economic dependence and which hid the very existence of power relations behind a network of seemingly equalitarian legal rules."¹⁷

Proceeding on the basis of this ideological blindness, liberals sought to universalise their domestic experiences by transferring them to the international sphere. Morgenthau suggests that the first manifestation of liberalism in international politics can be traced to the eighteenth century but "it was not before the end of the Napoleonic Wars that important sectors of public opinion demanded the application of liberal principles to international affairs [and] it was not before the turn of the [nineteenth] century that the Hague Peace Conferences made the first systematic attempt at establishing the reign of liberalism in the international field. The appearance of the League

¹⁷ *ibid.* p. 45.

of Nations after the first World War signified the triumph of liberalism on the international scene."¹⁸

Morgenthau seeks to question what today would be referred to as the 'liberal peace' thesis. The growth of forms of international communication - driven by technological innovation - is by no means the unambiguous good that nineteenth century liberals took it to be. It has also, for example, strengthened the capacity of governments to *restrict* movement if they choose to do so. As Morgenthau points out, effective passport controls are an innovation made possible by the introduction of new technology.¹⁹

He describes the belief in the pacifying effects of free trade as "the shibboleth of liberalism from the physiocrats, through Adam Smith, Cobden, and Bright, to Cordell Hull."²⁰ Once again an ideological weapon used by the middle classes against statist paternalism had come to be universalised; once again it served to mask the realities of power politics. Morgenthau draws heavily upon the mercantilist arguments of Friedrich List to argue that the British Government, having first strengthened domestic manufacturing and the position of the British fleet through the protectionism of the Navigation Acts, was now free to employ the rhetoric of open commerce as a device to preserve Britain's dominant position at the expense of potential rivals.²¹ Even if one were to accept that the benefits of free trade would accrue to all "there would still be nations that would covet the territory, the colonies, the markets, the economic resources of their neighbours."²²

The third element of the liberal triptych is the rule of law and it is here - most of all - that the 'domestic analogy' fails so transparently. The liberal conception of the law is based upon "...a threefold misrepresentation of reality. It misunderstands the general relationship between law and peace; it

¹⁸ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man* p. 41.

¹⁹ *ibid.* pp.82, 86-87.

²⁰ *ibid.* p.81

²¹ *ibid.* pp.84-85.

²² *ibid.* p.90.

overlooks the particular conditions which the rule of law encounters in the international sphere; and it presumes that all social conflicts, domestic or international, can be settled on the basis of established rules of law." The first point relates to an inversion of cause and effect. Liberals came to believe that "the peace, order, and prosperity of the Victorian age" was the product of the successful application of the rule of law when, in fact, it was its precondition. In effect, and to oversimplify, the base of material and social relations determines the 'superstructure' of the law and not the other way around. As such the call "for 'order under law' as alternative to the international anarchy of our age is reasonable only under the assumption that the international sphere already contains the social elements making for order and peace." This disregard for the particular has contributed to "the ineffectiveness of the international law of the liberal period" and the attempt made with the Briand-Kellogg Pact to outlaw war is a "monument to this kind of legalistic thinking."²³

The third element of Morgenthau's critique alludes to the simple fact that, inevitably, there will be times when social conflict - the primacy of the political - will prove to be beyond legal restraint. The ultimate - and tragic - symbol of liberal naiveté is "Chamberlain's waving of a piece of paper with Hitler's peace pledge as guaranty of 'peace in our time...'"²⁴

And where liberal states have resorted to war, the political has again been obscured by the liberal tendency to bestow a legitimacy to "wars for national unification and wars against despotic aggression" and so using the just end to "justify means otherwise condemned."²⁵ Hence the manifest

²³ *ibid.* pp.116-117.

²⁴ *ibid.* p.115. Though a brilliant administrator Chamberlain was "...completely lacking in that one quality without which no statesman could be successful: political imagination. ...[H]e was convinced that all men were bound to think and act like businessmen from Birmingham ... In that blind and naive belief that men like Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin can be dealt with after the fashion in which members of the British upper class deal with each other lies the ultimate source of his failure." See Morgenthau's review of K.Fely, "The Life of Neville Chamberlain", *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, March 23, 1947, part 4, p. 4.

²⁵ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, p.151

absurdity, as pointed out by Carl Schmitt and many other Germans, of America entering the European conflict on the basis of it being 'the war to end all wars'. Moreover, the objectives of the liberal wars - national unification and democratic liberation - "instead of doing away with the only remaining causes of war, intensified international antagonisms and made the broad masses of the peoples active participants in them... The triumph of nationalism and democracy, brought about by the liberal wars, therefore strengthened immensely the sovereignty of the state and with it the anarchical tendencies in international society."²⁶ The principle of national self-determination became, of course, a powerful ideological weapon of Hitler's enabling him to invoke "the professed principle of the Treaty of Versailles", as *The Times* described it in 1938, against its authors.²⁷

The motor of this liberal creed is the faith in science and the power of reason to transform the human condition. The age of "the scientific approach to international affairs" emerges fully at the end of the First World War and, notwithstanding the experience of a second European conflagration, continues to flourish. "Preceded by the Hague Conferences and hundreds of private peace congresses, the governments themselves embarked on a program of feverish activity, whose extent was unprecedented in all recorded history, with the purpose of solving all international problems through scientific methods."²⁸

Aside from the neglect of the political there are a number of ontological and epistemological problems which render 'scientism' inappropriate as a means to grasping social life.²⁹ His most fundamental point

²⁶ *ibid.* p.67. It is interesting to note here that Morgenthau anticipates the title of Headley Bull's now famous work *The Anarchical Society*.

²⁷ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, p.54.

²⁸ *ibid.* p.94

²⁹ Morgenthau defines 'scientism' as "...the belief that the problems of social life are in essence similar to the problems of physical nature, that, in the same way in which one can understand the facts of society and, through this knowledge, create a gigantic social mechanism which is at the command of the scientist master." Morgenthau, 'The Escape from Power in the Western World', p.3

is that the continuing efforts of the social sciences to ape their natural counterparts are based upon an outdated understanding of the natural sciences. The 'rational, calculable' universe of Galileo, Descartes, and Newton has been undermined by the scientific developments of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: what Thomas Kuhn would later come to describe, not without controversy, as a 'paradigm shift'.³⁰ Under the impact of Einstein, Planck, and the other great innovators in physics "matter has been dissolved into electronic atoms; the traditional concepts of time, space, and the law of gravitation have succumbed to the theory of relativity; the quantum theory has transformed causation into statistical probability and replaced determinism by the principle of indeterminacy. What ... nineteenth-century political thought and the social sciences refer to as their object of emulation is a ghost from which life has long since departed."³¹

Nor have the natural sciences been immune to the problems raised by the sociology of knowledge. The "seemingly spontaneous conquest of nature by reason" was, in fact, the product of "the emotional upheaval which followed upon the collapse of medieaval metaphysics and religion and the rise of new economic and social interests". Hence the alleged "triumph of "pure" reason over nature" is "but a historical coincidence and not a necessary stage in the ever progressing expansion of reason". At other times 'social interests' have prevented, for example, the universal recognition of the laws of planetary motion and they continue to oppose the acceptance of the law of evolution.³² In essence then, Morgenthau rejects the notion that there is a natural world which is independent of human cognition and purpose, merely awaiting discovery and classification.³³

³⁰ See Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (University of Chicago Press, 1962).

³¹ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, pp.131-132.

³² *ibid.* pp.160-161.

³³ This would seem to indicate that Morgenthau subscribes to a form of philosophical idealism but the reader is advised to treat this possibility with caution. Many of the sections dealing with scientific epistemology are very opaque indeed and a dozen readings of the

Such difficulties are compounded when we turn to the social sphere. The social scientist "...stands in the stream of social causation as an acting and reacting agent. What he sees and what he does not see are determined by his position in these streams; and by revealing what he sees in terms of his science he directly intervenes in the social process."³⁴ The social scientist is also subject to the limitations of his "membership in religious, political, social, and economic groups, which in turn will protect their particular taboos from analytical investigation and the concomitant risk of destruction."³⁵ At times Morgenthau goes a very long way indeed in his rejection of positivism and the claims of the social sciences to universality. The following extraordinary passage introduces an almost Gadamerian hermeneutic:

"The presupposition of universality which the social sciences borrow from the natural ones, then, not only does not strengthen the scientific character of the former but tends to impair it. It does not strengthen it, for the irrational determination of the social sciences is incompatible with their universality. Their claim to universality, however, is actually detrimental to their scientific claim, since it obliterates the social and moral determination by which all social science is qualified. It is only through the recognition of this social and moral determination that social science is possible at all. A social science which refuses to recognize this determination and clings to the illusion of universality destroys through this very attribute its only chance for scientific achievement. The truth of the social sciences, then, is truth only under the

critical section from pages 140-145 has failed to leave me entirely clear as to Morgenthau's precise meaning. This philosophical idealism would also seem to rest uneasily with elements of determinism elsewhere where the ubiquitous lust for power in human beings is ascribed by Morgenthau to biological foundations.

³⁴ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, pp.142-143.

³⁵ *ibid.* p.163. Elsewhere Morgenthau rejected Arnold Toynbee's comparative treatment of civilisations because he couldn't see how any observer could "transcend the confines of his own civilisation". See 'Toynbee and the Historical Imagination', *Encounter*, March 1955, pp.2-3.

particular perspective of the observer, yet under this perspective it is truth. And this is the only kind of truth to be had in the social sphere." ³⁶

Moving from the epistemological to ontological and methodological problems Morgenthau emphasises the sheer complexity of social life. While the natural sciences deals with "...isolated causes operating upon motionless objects, the social sciences deals with interminable chains of causes and effects..." The natural sciences can "fortell with a high degree of certainty that upon a certain typical cause a certain typical effect will follow." ³⁷

To these problems one has to add the contingencies and elements of unpredictability that are an inevitable part of social life in addition to those 'irrational' elements that are also part of human nature. How then can we pursue any form of meaningful social enquiry given this assault on rationalism by "modern epistemology, psychology, and the sociology of knowledge?" ³⁸

Morgenthau's solution is to adopt methods similar to those employed by Max Weber in order to crystallise elements of rationality. While accepting the importance of "the irrational realities of life" Morgenthau nevertheless asserts that reason does, on the whole, manage to keep irrational impulses within manageable limits through the exercise of a "fourfold harmonizing function for human action. It tends towards creating harmony among several conflicting , irrational impulses. It brings ends and means into harmony with irrational impulses. It establishes harmony among several conflicting ends. It brings means into harmony with ends." ³⁹ Even so it is important to draw attention to the "limitation of rational choice." While reason functions to harmonise means and ends the chosen end is often the product of non-

³⁶ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, pp.166-167.

³⁷ *ibid.* pp.129-131. This does seem to be a rather oversimplified treatment.

³⁸ *ibid.* pp.153-154. It goes without saying that Morgenthau wishes to avoid a fundamentally anti-foundationalist conclusion.

³⁹ *ibid.* pp.157-158.

rational impulses.⁴⁰ "There may", Morgenthau cautions, "be objectives and techniques much more attractive from the standpoint of reason than those actually chosen."⁴¹ This amounts, in other words, to Morgenthau invoking Weber's notion of instrumental rationality.⁴²

Turning to the question of historical contingency, Morgenthau notes that if social life "were completely contingent and irregular only religion and philosophy would be able to give meaning and order the historic past" and that "whatever meaning and order there is in history is only the reflection of the historian's own mind." He qualifies this understanding of contingency with the suggestion that "... the contingencies of the present and of the future array themselves in a limited number of typical patterns. A historical situation always contains only a limited number of potentialities."⁴³ Morgenthau uses as an historical illustration the situation in Germany in 1932 which he suggests to have contained three "...germinal developments: parliamentary democracy, military dictatorship, and nazism." The question of which of these three possibilities would ultimately come to pass was contingent and unforeseeable but, even so, further extrapolation is still possible. Assuming the emergence of nazism one could anticipate "conservative militarism, social revolution, or totalitarian party dictatorship." Similar possibilities could be isolated when looking at the other potential elements of National Socialist policy. This same method of analysis "...applies to any other political or social problem at any period of history..."⁴⁴ By way of summary Morgenthau claims that:

"Ultimately, the whole future of the social world appears to the analytical mind as a highly complicated combination of numerous systems of multiple

⁴⁰ *ibid.* p.156.

⁴¹ *ibid.* p.158.

⁴² The problem of Morgenthau's connection with rationality will be raised again towards the end of the chapter.

⁴³ Morgenthau may have drawn this idea from Mannheim who made a very similar claim. See Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* pp.114-115.

⁴⁴ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, pp.149-150.

choices which in turn are strictly limited in number. The element of irrationality, insecurity, and chance lies in the necessity of choice among several possibilities multiplied by the great number of systems of multiple choice. Viewed with the guidance of a rationalistic, blueprinted map the social world is, indeed, a chaos of contingencies. Yet it is not devoid of a measure of rationality if approached with the expectations of Macbethian cynicism."⁴⁵

The question of whether or not this amounts to anything like a convincing epistemological position will be considered later. For the moment I wish to turn to Morgenthau's treatment of ethics: another of the areas in which 'Scientific Man' is labouring under fundamental misapprehensions.

"Traditional ethics", according to Morgenthau, is based upon "the distinction and strict separation of the ought-to-be and the to-be, the normative and the empirical... The ethical command, conceived in terms of the divine will or of the reasonable nature of man, transcends the empirical sphere and belongs to the world of norms, ends, and values."⁴⁶ This dichotomy came to be abandoned in the nineteenth century under the dual impact of Kant's categorical imperative and various forms of utilitarianism.⁴⁷ In both cases, Morgenthau asserts, ethics is reduced to an "applied social science."⁴⁸ The quintessential example of the "...belief in the power of a perfectionist ethics to transform the actions of man by its rational force alone" is provided by Woodrow Wilson.⁴⁹ Other attempts to overcome "the chasm between rationalist ethics and reality" include certain forms of religious organisations and "all totalitarian political philosophies from Hobbes and Hegel to modern dictatorship."⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *ibid.* pp.150-151.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p.15.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* pp.15-17.

⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.172.

⁴⁹ *ibid.* p.173. Elsewhere Morgenthau refers to Gladstone, Wilson, and Briand as "Don Quixotes on the political scene." Morgenthau, 'Scientific Solution', in Bryson et. al., *Approaches to Unity*, p.431.

⁵⁰ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, pp.174-175. To list Hobbes and Hegel as exemplars of "totalitarian political philosophies" may be somewhat cavalier.

In so far as secular Western thought goes beyond perfectionist ethics and 'mere utilitarianism' it makes the further misunderstanding of subscribing to an ethical dualism based around the separation of the political from the private sphere. This misapprehension manifests itself in three ways; the first exempts action undertaken within the political sphere from any kind of ethical limitation; the second accepts as a given a qualitatively different ethic for political action; the third recognises the existence of this qualitative distinction but hopes for its transformation into a universal ethical standard based upon private ethical standards.⁵¹

Morgenthau links the first approach - fairly or not - with Machiavelli and Hobbes and their alleged subscription to the 'reason of state'. Where statesmen act in their public capacity they are subject to no 'rule of conduct' apart from that dictated by self-interest and the exigencies of survival, whereas in their private capacity they are free to make moral choices. This amounts to an ethical dualism in its starkest form: individual morality is juxtaposed with the amorality of the political sphere. The importance of this conception, Morgenthau suggests, has been "literary rather than practical" because "mankind has at all times refused to forgo ethical evaluation of political action." From the time of Ancient Greece political philosophy has been based on the assumption that action in the political sphere should conform to a standard higher than that of mere success. Even when motivated by mere expediency and self-interest actors have felt it necessary to justify their actions in ethical terms. This suggests that no acts can actually be 'beyond good and evil' altogether. "This curious dialectic of ethics and politics", as Morgenthau describes it, "which prevents the latter, in spite of itself, from escaping the former's judgement and normative direction has its roots in the nature of man as both a political and moral animal." ⁵²

⁵¹ *ibid.* pp.175-176.

⁵² *ibid.* pp.176-177. E.H. Carr referred to the "curious way in which power and ethics are intertwined in all political problems." E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis 1919-1939*

The second misapprehension is based upon the acceptance of a similar duality but in this case the political sphere is, in effect, held to be immoral rather than amoral. Given that "no Civilization can be satisfied with such a dual morality" efforts to bridge the gap often culminate in a Wilsonian-style perfectionist ethics.

Perhaps even more dangerous still is the situation where the gap is justified in the name of some greater moral principle, that is, where certain immoral political actions may be justified in the name of some greater moral end.⁵³ Here Morgenthau notes Stalin's infamous rationalisation of the deaths of millions during the drive for collectivisation on the basis of being "engaged in a work which will benefit the whole of humanity."⁵⁴

The problem of course, as Weber established, is that there is no objective way in which to weigh an immoral means against a moral end. As Morgenthau points out "one may argue from the point of view of a particular political philosophy, but one cannot prove from the point of universal and objective ethical standards that the good of the end ought to prevail over the evil of the means; for there is no objective standard by which to compare the kinds of happiness or of misery of the happiness of one man with the misery of another."⁵⁵ An ethical standard based around the intent of actions rather than their ends is similarly flawed because, a la Weber, "...it violates the ethics of responsibility to which all action affecting others, and hence political action par excellence, is subject."⁵⁶

All of these approaches to ethics commit the error of idealising the individual sphere and juxtaposing it against the evil of political action. This duality is sustained by reified images of collective identities. As Morgenthau

(Macmillan, London, 1969), p.241. Given this and a number of other strikingly similar passages it may well be the case that Carr was an important (and unacknowledged) influence upon Morgenthau when he was writing *Scientific Man*.

⁵³ *ibid.* pp.180-182.

⁵⁴ *ibid.* p.182.

⁵⁵ *ibid.* p.183.

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p.186.

reminds us "it is always the individual who acts, whether with reference to his own ends alone or with reference to the ends of others. The action of society, of the nation, or of any other collectivity, political or otherwise, as such has no empirical existence at all. What empirically exist are always the actions of individuals who perform identical or different actions with reference to a common end." Given this, the dualities of individual/social and private/political can only be relatively rather than absolutely different. As all action is potentially immoral the moral hazards of the political sphere may be more heightened and more acute but they are not qualitatively different.⁵⁷ "The evil that corrupts political action", Morgenthau asserts, "is the same evil that corrupts all action..."⁵⁸ And the roots of this ubiquitous evil lie in the *animus dominandi*, the lust for power.

As has already been suggested Morgenthau's *animus dominandi* has much in common with Nietzsche's 'Will to Power'. In both cases the desire for power extends well beyond the limits of mere individual survival.⁵⁹ This element of corruption is a universal feature of human existence but its impact "is broadened and its intensity strengthened by the particular conditions under which action proceeds in the modern nation state."⁶⁰ The state has become both "the most exalted object of loyalty on the part of the individual" and "the most effective organization for the exercise of power over the individual." It has acted as a receptacle for the egotism and power impulses of individuals: egotism is transformed into nationalism. Suitably buttressed "the state's collective desire for power is limited, aside from self-chosen limitations, only by the ruins of an old, and the rudiments of a new, normative order, both too feeble to offer more than a mere intimation of

⁵⁷ *ibid.* pp187-188. "The very act of acting destroys our moral integrity. Whoever wants to retain his moral innocence must forego action altogether and, following Hamlet's advice to Ophelia, "go...to a nunnery". p.189.

⁵⁸ *ibid.* pp.195.

⁵⁹ *ibid.* pp. 192-195.

⁶⁰ *ibid.* p.197.

actual restraint. Above it, there is no centralized authority beyond the mechanics of the balance of power, which could impose actual limits upon the collective desire for domination. The state has become indeed a "mortal god" and for an age that believes no longer in an immortal God, the state becomes the only God there is."⁶¹ This passage incorporates much of the German intellectual legacy brought by Morgenthau to America in emphasising, as it does, the importance of power and the political, the metaphysical crisis occasioned by 'the Death of God' and the sheer perils of modernity.

That modern political life is so perilous only serves to re-emphasise the facile nature of the schemes of 'Scientific Man' for putting an end to international conflict. From the antinomy of "the lust for power as ubiquitous empirical fact and its denial as universal ethical norm" comes an awareness of the tragic nature of the human condition, an awareness apparent in the foundations of "the nonutilitarian ethical standards of Western Civilization" but oblivious to Scientific Man.⁶² And it "is only the awareness of the tragic presence of evil in all political action which at least enables man to choose the lesser evil and to be as good as he can be in an evil world."⁶³ This emphasis on the tragedy of the political, so aptly described elsewhere as the 'Realist Jeremiad', was the most important component of this message from old world to new.⁶⁴

What, then, are we to make of *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics* more than fifty years after its publication? Identifying the intellectual influences upon its creation is comparatively easy - Nietzsche, Weber, Mannheim, Schmitt and, of contemporaries, E.H. Carr and Reinhold Niebuhr - but reaching an overall judgement of the book is more difficult.⁶⁵ Our task is

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.* pp. 201,209.

⁶³ *ibid.* pp.202-203.

⁶⁴ Rosenthal, *Righteous Realists*, pp.32-36.

⁶⁵ Niebuhr was one of the few to receive a formal acknowledgement in the book itself (p.236), though Morgenthau always claimed to have arrived at his conclusions independently of Niebuhr. See his letter to Robert Good, January 11, 1954, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 23. He was

complicated by the fact that even Henry Kissinger has felt it necessary to pronounce that "Wilsonianism has survived while history has bypassed the reservations of his contemporaries."⁶⁶ With the removal of the massive, brooding, presence of the Cold War it does seem, at least on the surface, that the space for ethical choices has been widened. Given Morgenthau's opposition to the particular form of the Nuremberg Trials (an essentially political act given a legal mask) one wonders what he would have made of the possibility of the establishment of a permanent War Crimes Tribunal. From the vantage point of the late twentieth century - the 'End of History' for some - it appears that it is the conflict-ridden system of Westphalia that is contingent rather than the principles of nineteenth century liberalism.⁶⁷

It is, indeed, one of the most striking elements of *Scientific Man* that Morgenthau criticises the political philosophy of liberalism for its ahistoricity while at the same time feeling confident enough to assert the existence of older, eternal verities.⁶⁸ This tension between the universal and the particular is, of course, a fundamental problem for almost any form of social enquiry but the especially stark nature of the contrast that Morgenthau establishes here leaves this reader at least feeling rather uneasy, particularly given Morgenthau's awareness of the problems posed by the sociology of knowledge.

A similar tension pervades Morgenthau's broader philosophical disposition. Though his position clearly cannot be one of a pure philosophical idealism, for him to claim that we can only know the physical world "...within the limits of our cognitive faculties..." or that, "there exists... a correlation

later to suggest that in America Niebuhr was "responsible for the rediscovery of Political Man". Morgenthau, 'The Influence of Reinhold Niebuhr in American Political Life and Thought' in H. Landen (ed.), *Reinhold Niebuhr: A Prophetic Voice in Our Time* (Books for Libraries Press, Plain View, New York, 1962) p.99.

⁶⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, (Simon and Schuster, London, 1994) p.30.

⁶⁷ In fairness to Morgenthau he was fully aware of the historically contingent nature of the states system. Social conflict is universal but its manifestations are particular.

⁶⁸ Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, pp.4-5.

between our minds and physical nature as it is reflected in our consciousness" is to place a great deal of emphasis upon the importance of cognition.⁶⁹ At the same time - and even as he is lambasting the attempts of social scientists to imitate the methods of the natural sciences - he is writing to a zoologist at the University of Chicago and asking "...whether the drive for power exists among non-human animals divorced from any concrete objective such as space, food, or mates."⁷⁰ Again, while this sort of tension may be common enough, Morgenthau's handling of it is not very convincing.

In terms of the book's historical analysis there is much that is convincing in his treatment of nineteenth century liberalism and its impact upon the rise of Scientific Man. There is undoubtedly something extraordinary about a Victorian culture professing a commitment to a 'liberal peace' which is simultaneously involved in the maintenance and expansion of a global empire. This must surely amount, if anything does, to an 'ideology'. Morgenthau is also aware of the revolution wrought by Einstein and others in science and that many social scientists were continuing to base their methods on an outdated understanding of the practices of scientific research. In terms of accounting for the rise of Scientific Man, however, as Michael Oakshott has pointed out, "...the reader will be disappointed if he looks in his essay for a genuinely historical account of the manifestations of the faith: Professor Morgenthau is, in fact, no historian. The historical springs of the faith remain

⁶⁹ *ibid.* pp.141-142.

⁷⁰ See the letters from W.C. Allee to Hans Morgenthau of September 28 1944 and November 30 1944, Morgenthau Papers, Box 3. Dr Allee warns that "...it would be as much a mistake to be animo-morphic in our view of men as to be anthro-morphic in our view of other animals." In spite of this qualification Morgenthau still felt able to use Dr Allee's publications in support of the view he states in *Politics Among Nations* that "Zoologists have shown that the drive to dominate is to be found even in animals, such as chickens and monkeys, who create social hierarchies on the basis of will and the ability to dominate." See *Politics Among Nations* (Alfred A.Knopf, New York, 1948) p.17. In his review of *Politics Among Nations* Barrington Moore pointed to the "questionable parallel with animal societies." See *The American Sociological Review*, Vol.14, April 1949, p.326. Morgenthau wrote Moore that he was "somewhat amazed at your strictures against the ubiquity of power drives." Moore replied that he "did not think that all social and historical experience points to anything like a universal power drive." See Morgenthau's letter of May 26, 1949 and Moore's reply of May 28 in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 40.

a mystery, and the circumstances of its appearance and propagation are never properly considered."⁷¹ One might have replied on Morgenthau's behalf that such a thoroughgoing historical treatment was beyond the scope of the exercise but Oakshott does draw attention to a problem which is evident elsewhere. Morgenthau was as guilty as many of his fellow social scientists of treating history as a grab-bag to be raided indiscriminately for empirical examples to buttress particular arguments, without devoting sufficient thought to the intellectual problems involved in so doing.

Michael Oakshott is a seemingly unlikely reviewer for a book like *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics* but his is in every respect the most illuminating review that I have come across. Though broadly sympathetic to Morgenthau's critique Oakshott nevertheless develops a number of criticisms that echo across Morgenthau's work. Oakshott suggests that while "there is plenty in his book to show that he can recognize [the] differences", he nonetheless fails to make clear the distinctions between the pursuit of rational enquiry and 'rationalism' and scientific enquiry and 'scientism'.⁷² In a letter to Oakshott Morgenthau claimed that he was fully aware of the importance of the distinctions but he also accepted that he had failed to make this clear in the book.⁷³ Oakshott's point is, again, well-made but one of the reasons for the lack of clarity is the genuine ambivalence in Morgenthau's methodological and deeper epistemological positions much like that present in Max Weber's attempt to fashion an epistemological 'third way'. As Jaap Nobel is also aware there is an inherent tension in Morgenthau's work between "the

⁷¹ Michael Oakshott, 'Scientific Politics', *The Cambridge Journal*, Vol. I, No.6, March 1948, p.350.

⁷² *ibid.* pp.348-349.

⁷³ Letter to Professor Michael Oakshott, May 22 1948, Box 44, *Morgenthau Papers*. This is one of the very few examples in which Morgenthau responds directly to a review of one of his books. He was clearly flattered to have reached Oakshott's attention and, as he wrote, "to be taken seriously has come to me as a pleasant - and gratifying - surprise."

hermeneutical approach which seeks to understand in subjective terms, and the empirical approach which seeks to explain in objective terms." ⁷⁴

Perhaps the most telling criticism made by Oakshott is that Morgenthau says "nothing about the art of statesmanship." Again, one might have replied on Morgenthau's behalf that this wasn't necessary for his purposes in *Scientific Man* but when he does actually turn his attention to diplomacy and statesmanship in later works, he fails to tackle the central problem of how this discourse is to be articulated under the conditions of modernity. Nor is the reader ever really made clear as to how the statesman can be freed of the dilemma posed by the sociology of knowledge. More broadly, there is the problem of how we actually come to judge the worth of particular statesmen and this is highlighted most clearly in Morgenthau's treatment of Neville Chamberlain.

In *Politics Among Nations* Morgenthau goes to great lengths to stress that the analysis of international politics is no easy matter and that the statesman's task in this respect is fraught with difficulties but if this is so it is hard to understand how he can be so scathing in his judgement of Chamberlain. Given that virtually the entire German elite also mis-read Hitler how can one attach serious shortcomings to a British Prime Minister for doing likewise? It may be fairer to say of Chamberlain, as Machiavelli may well have done, that he lacked *Fortuna*. And the only useful analogy to be drawn from Munich is, surely, the fundamental difficulty that exists in drawing appropriate historical analogies.

Morgenthau's position seems all the more surprising when one learns that he was aware that E.H. Carr, prior to the collapse of the Munich 'Settlement', had lauded Chamberlain in the first edition of *the Twenty Years Crisis* as, in Morgenthau's summary, "the prototype of a statesman combining

⁷⁴ Jaap Nobel, 'Morgenthau's struggle with power: the theory of power politics and the Cold War', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.21, 1995, p.81.

the elements of realism and utopianism in his thought and action", a judgement which was quietly excised by Carr from the second edition which appeared after World War Two.⁷⁵ This should have provided Morgenthau with a forceful reminder of how difficult it is to judge in these matters. In an article written some years later Morgenthau recalled "the near-unanimity with which the Munich Settlement was approved by the theoreticians and practitioners of foreign policy and by the man in the street" as an example to illustrate "the contingencies inherent in political prediction."⁷⁶ Notwithstanding this emphasis upon contingency Morgenthau still felt able to claim that "from that experience we have developed the theoretical categories which demonstrate that it was bound to be such a failure."⁷⁷ This amounts to a gross overstatement of what can actually be accomplished with a theoretical framework, realist or otherwise. In truth it is by no means clear that Morgenthau is able, any more than Weber on the recognition of charismatic leadership, to provide effective criteria for the identification of effective statesmen and successful statesmanship.

Perhaps the most interesting point to be raised by Oakshott's review was contained in his response to Morgenthau's suggestion that statesmen should be aware of the 'tragic sense of life'. Oakshott, in his typically forthright way, rejected the notion entirely:

"Human life is not 'tragic', either in part or in whole; tragedy belongs to art, not to life. And further, the situation [Morgenthau] describes - the imperfectability of man - is not tragic, nor even a predicament, unless and until it is contrasted with a human nature susceptible of a perfection which is in fact foreign to its character... To children and to romantic women, but to no

⁷⁵ Morgenthau, 'The Political Science of EH Carr', *World Politics*, Vol. I, October 1948, p.130. For the relevant passages in Carr see *The Twenty Year's Crisis*, pp.278-282.

⁷⁶ Elsewhere he asks "how was one to know with any degree of certainty what Hitler's ultimate objectives were?" Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p. 47.

⁷⁷ Morgenthau, 'The Purpose of Political Science', in James C. Charlesworth (ed.), *A Design for Political Science: Scope, Objectives, and Methods* (Philadelphia, 1966), p.67.

one else, it may appear 'tragic' that we cannot enjoy spring without winter, eternal youth, and passion always at the height of its beginning."⁷⁸

This was the only point of Oakshott's critique that Morgenthau rejected entirely:

"I would not for a moment admit that tragedy is a category of art and not of life. How could Hamlet be tragic if he did not represent an element in life containing all the elements of tragedy and waiting for the artist to give them voice and colour? Man is tragic because he cannot do what he ought to do. That contrast between duty and ability is a quality of existence, not a creation of art."⁷⁹

There is no way to reconcile these positions (though Morgenthau's point that art could not be perceived to be tragic if it did not have some basis in the social world is surely a good one) but one suspects that for most human beings with explicit moral sensibilities and a concern for the human condition it is Morgenthau's position that can be empathised with most keenly. How many of us do not, at least to some degree, feel the weight of a gap between is and ought? One could also see these contrasting positions as a reflection of the difference between English and Continental intellectual cultures and historical experiences.⁸⁰ It is much easier for an Englishman, the product of a relatively stable political culture protected by the English Channel from the worst excesses of continental violence and the necessity for stark political choices, to deny that the notion of tragedy pertains at all to the human condition.

This concern with tragedy highlights Morgenthau's acute ethical sensibilities and the intensity of his desire to identify and maintain a space for the ethical in political life which, indeed, is obvious throughout *Scientific Man*. One can, therefore, empathise with his frustration that, some fifteen years

⁷⁸ Oakshott, 'Scientific Politics', p.356.

⁷⁹ Morgenthau, Letter to Oakshott.

⁸⁰ I am, of course, aware that this amounts to an oversimplification.

later, he was "...still being accused of indifference to the moral problem in spite of abundant evidence... to the contrary."⁸¹ He has consistently rejected the notion of an ethical duality of moral man and immoral society by claiming instead that the ethical dilemmas posed in the public sphere are only relatively not absolutely different from those in other areas.⁸² Even so, in *Scientific Man* and elsewhere, Morgenthau finds it necessary to emphasise the starker nature of the ethical choices available in the political sphere generally and in the realm of international politics specifically. Though he is able to avoid an ethical dualism in theory, in practice one finds that time and again he feels unable to avoid the position that the political sphere does indeed pose ethical questions of a different order.⁸³ This political threat to the ethical space which Morgenthau wishes to identify is magnified by the specific conditions of social life in the mid-twentieth century. The replacement of an aristocratic cosmopolitanism with a nationalistic universalism, in combination with an unprecedented technological capacity for destructiveness, threatened to crush the ethical space that Morgenthau would like to protect. Ironically, Morgenthau criticised EH Carr for having a "relativistic, instrumentalist conception of morality" which lacked a "transcendant standard of ethics" but Morgenthau's emphasis upon the perilous position of humanity at the mid-point of the twentieth century betrayed his own lack of faith in the existence of transcendental ethical forms.⁸⁴ Morgenthau actually conceded the point in private correspondence with Carr:

⁸¹ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 3rd edition, 1960) preface.

⁸² See, for example, his letter to William Fox in which he agrees (with Herbert Butterfield) "...that a dual morality does not exist. However, in the public realm the moral dilemma is more extreme and the ability to satisfy moral commands is more limited." Letter to William T.R. Fox, June 2, 1956, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 22.

⁸³ It was, for example, manifest nonsense to maintain, as Morgenthau did, that what he called the "typical conflict between the mother-in-law and her child's spouse [which] is in essence a struggle for power" could somehow be qualitatively related to interstate warfare. See *Politics Among Nations*, first edition 1948, p.18.

⁸⁴ Morgenthau, 'The Political Science of EH Carr', p.134. For confirmation that Carr "viewed morality in an almost purely instrumental and epiphenomenal way" see William T. R. Fox, 'E.H. Carr and political realism: vision and revision', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.11, No.1, 1985, p.9.

Carr: "What you seem to have proved is not so much the bankruptcy of my political thinking - that would not matter - but the bankruptcy of the political thinking of the West."

Morgenthau: "... I agree with what I take to be your position that the insufficiency of your political philosophy - as of mine - is but a symptom of the insufficiency - or if you wish "bankruptcy" - of the political philosophy of the West."⁸⁵

If the tragedy of politics in general and the perilous nature of modern political life in particular represented the most important message of *Scientific Man* it is also true that Morgenthau could scarcely have found a less congenial political culture than the United States in which to deliver it, as we shall see later on in the chapter. For the moment, however, I wish to turn my attention to *Politics Among Nations* which was the second of the three books which established Morgenthau's reputation.

Politics Among Nations

Politics Among Nations is undoubtedly Morgenthau's best known work having sold something like 500,000 copies in its six editions. Francis Fukuyama has described it as "...perhaps the single greatest influence on the way Americans thought about foreign policy during the Cold War."⁸⁶ Some of Morgenthau's critique of political liberalism from *Scientific Man* is reproduced here but most of the work is concerned with developing Morgenthau's alternative schematic based around the notion that "international politics, like all politics is a struggle for power" which is "universal in time and space."⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See Carr's letter to Morgenthau of July 21, 1958 and Morgenthau's reply of July 28 in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 9. One reviewer of *Scientific Man* thought that he detected "implicit in his analysis a nihilism born of despair that is characteristic of all non-christian existential thinkers." See John Halliwell's review of *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics* in the *Christian Science Monitor*, October 6, 1947, pp.586-587.

⁸⁶ Fukuyama, *The End of History*, p.246.

⁸⁷ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp.13-14.

Morgenthau continues to resist notions of ethical dualism by asserting that conflict is a ubiquitous feature of social life - "a constitutive element of all human associations".⁸⁸ Morgenthau understands power itself to mean "man's control over the minds and actions of other men." Political power is "a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised" and is to be distinguished from military power which reflects the actual exercise of physical violence.⁸⁹ The fact that states are unable to calculate their relative positions vis-a-vis other states with any accuracy means that they are forced to attempt to maximise their power positions. In international politics this gives rise to three fundamental positions based on policies aimed at the retention of power, the increase of power, and the demonstration of power which Morgenthau labels respectively as policies of the status quo, imperialism and prestige.⁹⁰

He later suggests that a policy of prestige is usually an instrument of the other two forms of policy involving ceremonial display or the exhibition of military force as in, for example, the invitation by the United States to foreign observers to witness atomic tests. Setting this aside, it is the first two policies which are of the greatest importance. The notion of a policy aimed at the maintenance of an existing distribution of power, of the status quo, requires little further explanation and Morgenthau provides various historical illustrations of the theme, including that of France in the period between the two World Wars in its attempts to form alliances to contain the German challenge to the status quo. Policies of imperialism involve precisely such an attempt to overthrow the status quo and in certain instances have amounted to efforts to attain European or global domination. Morgenthau seeks to give the term 'imperialism' "an ethically neutral, objective, and definable meaning"

⁸⁸ *ibid.* p.18.

⁸⁹ *ibid.* pp.14-15.

⁹⁰ *ibid.* p.21. This establishes an immediate tension between power maximisation and a policy aimed consciously at the maintenance of a status quo - more on this later.

which is somewhat at odds with conventional understandings. He rejects theories of imperialism which seek to link it as a phenomenon with forms of economic organisation - specifically capitalism - or more particularly with the alleged interests of big business in the promotion of war. He also suggests that imperialism needs to be understood in a dynamic sense and not as a static category. Hence British foreign policy in the 1870s, aimed at the consolidation of its empire, constituted a policy of the status quo, not of imperialism. The fundamental question arising from this is how these imperial drives, these challenges to the status quo, are contained. Morgenthau identifies two factors at this point; the first being the operation of the so-called balance-of-power and the quality of its attendant diplomacy and the second being the limits which ethics places at any given time upon the pursuit of power.

A detailed exploration of the history of the notion of the balance-of-power is beyond the scope of this dissertation but we do need to consider Morgenthau's understanding of its evolution in both theory and practice.⁹¹ While Morgenthau considers broader notions about the need to balance social forces to be "as old as political history itself" he traces systematic reflection on the balance-of-power in interstate politics from its beginnings in the thought of Bacon and Guicciardini in the sixteenth century to the heyday of the balance-of-power in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The irony, though Morgenthau doesn't appear to be aware of it as such, is that in many ways the notion is clearly infused with ideas drawn from the Enlightenment, in particular the physics of Isaac Newton and the political philosophy of Montesquieu. As Morgenthau himself pointed out, "the idea of a balance among a number of nations for the purposes of preventing any one of them from becoming strong enough to threaten the independence of the others is a

⁹¹ For a good general overview see Michael Sheehan, *The Balance of Power: History and Theory* (Routledge, London, 1996)

metaphor taken from the field of mechanics. It was appropriate to the way of thinking of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries which liked to picture society and the whole universe as a gigantic mechanism, a machine or a clockwork, created and kept in motion by the divine watchmaker."⁹² Torbjorn Knutsen sees it as paradoxical that "this age which emphasised so insistently the primacy of human reason, built its most characteristic social vision on an irrational, extra-human principle of self-adjustment."⁹³ Knutsen indirectly captures the essence of perhaps the most important debate surrounding the balance-of-power, namely, is it to be treated as the outcome of a mere mechanical process of self-interested, power-maximising actors, or can it only be created as the product of specific design on the part of sympathetic actors who display at least a degree of empathy for the intent of the others and some broader understanding that the 'game' has limits?

Richard Little has rather nicely summarised these contrasting positions as, respectively, adversarial and associative understandings of the balance-of-power.⁹⁴ The problem with Morgenthau's treatment is that he oscillates between these two positions, at times emphasising that the balance of power is some sort of self-regulating mechanism, at others that its successful operation requires a broader normative framework and he sometimes offers a rather uneasy mix of the two. His historical treatment of the balance-of-power draws attention to this.

In the broadest terms he traces the rise of the balance-of-power from the beginnings of the modern state system - for Morgenthau circa the fifteenth century - to the Napoleonic Wars as a period in which the European actors, excepting Turkey, were of most importance. The period from 1815 through the two World Wars witnessed the global extension of the system. The

⁹² Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p.151.

⁹³ T.Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory* (Manchester University press, 1992) p.126.

⁹⁴ Richard Little, 'Deconstructing the balance of power: two traditions of thought,' *Review of International Studies*, Vol.15, No.2, April 1989, p.88.

eighteenth century was "the golden age of the balance of power in theory as well as practice. It was during that period that most of the literature of the balance of power was published and that the princes of Europe looked to the balance of power as the supreme principle to guide their conduct in foreign affairs. It is true that they allowed themselves to be guided by it in order to further their own interests. But, by doing so, it was inevitable that they would change sides, desert old alliances, and form new ones whenever it seemed to them that the balance of power had been disturbed and that a realignment of forces was needed to re-establish it. In that period, foreign policy was indeed a sport of kings, not to be taken more seriously than games and gambles, played for strictly limited stakes, and utterly devoid of transcendent principles of any kind... [S]uch was the nature of international politics... all executed according to the rules of the game which all players recognised as binding. The balance of power of that period was amoral rather than immoral. The technical rules of the art of politics were its only standard."⁹⁵

This 'golden age' came to an abrupt end with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. The "cleavage between nationalism and legitimacy" opened up by the French Revolution was never subsequently closed but the Concert of Europe "was most successful in preserving the general peace during the ninety years of its existence."⁹⁶ Its success was facilitated by three factors; firstly the fact that 'politically empty spaces' (!) as Morgenthau describes them were available for political expansion thus acting as a kind of pressure valve coupled with the willingness of Britain to undertake consciously to maintain the balance-of-power; secondly the fact that the "moral consensus lived on as a feeble echo"; thirdly, and most importantly,

⁹⁵ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p.139. For a similar assessment see P.A. Reynolds, 'The Balance of Power: New Wine In An Old Bottle', *Political Studies*, Vol.XXIII, 1975, p.231.

⁹⁶ *ibid.* p.368. He suggest that the Crimean War was caused by a series of unfortunate accidents.

the Concert of Europe was shaped by "a succession of brilliant diplomats and statesmen who knew how to make peace, how to preserve peace, and how to keep wars short and limited in scope." ⁹⁷

All this took place, with the exception of the Wars of Religion in the seventeenth century and the Napoleonic Wars, within a context where the conduct of war itself was 'limited' in three ways; firstly by the percentage of the population emotionally engaged and participating directly in war; secondly by the percentage of the population affected by war; and thirdly by the objectives of war.⁹⁸ 'Limited war' has turned into 'total' war in the twentieth century because of profound changes in military technology and the prevailing normative ethos. The mechanisation of war has both increased its destructiveness and ensured that whole populations have to be mobilised in order to maintain these vast fighting machines.

Alongside these technological developments the normative ethos has been gravely weakened by the rise of modern nationalism which, contrary to the hopes of its nineteenth century champions, has proved to be "particularistic and exclusive" rather than "universalistic and humanitarian."⁹⁹ Nationalism has ensured the fragmentation of the "aristocratic international society."¹⁰⁰ One of the concrete manifestations of this has been the diminution of the norms which had developed around the actual conduct of war, i.e. the distinction between combatants and non-combatants; the treatment of prisoners of war; the prohibition of the use of assassination as a legitimate tool of statecraft and so on.¹⁰¹ Nationalism has also undermined the effectiveness of the balance-of-power, as Morgenthau explains:

"Of the temperateness and undecisiveness of the political contests, from 1648 to the Napoleonic Wars and then from 1815 to 1914, the balance-of-power is

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

⁹⁸ *ibid.* p.181.

⁹⁹ *ibid.* p.189.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* p.190.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* pp.178-185.

not so much the cause as the metaphorical and symbolic expression or, at least, the technique of realisation. Before the balance-of-power could impose its restraints upon the power aspirations of nations through the mechanical interplay of opposing forces, the competing nations had first to restrain themselves by accepting the system of the balance of power as the common framework of their endeavours".¹⁰²

The end result at the middle of the twentieth century is a contest between a pair of superpowers, armed with weapons of unprecedented destructive capacity, in a context of gravely weakened supranational norms where diplomacy has lost its vitality.

How convincing, then, is all of this as an historical account? Henry Kissinger, for one, entirely rejects the notion that the eighteenth century was marked by any sort of associative balance-of-power. The philosophers of the Enlightenment, he suggests, "...were confusing the result with the intent. Throughout the eighteenth century, the princes of Europe fought innumerable wars without there being a shred of evidence that their conscious goal was to implement any general notion of international order."¹⁰³ That "a sort of equilibrium gradually emerged out of this seeming anarchy and rapine" is entirely due to the simple fact that no state was able to form an empire over the opposition of the others.¹⁰⁴ In other words, the balance-of-power was adversarial rather than associative. It is indeed rather difficult to reconcile the continental ambitions of Louis XIV with the sort of aristocratic game, played for small stakes, which Morgenthau describes. That the struggle appears to have been restricted may simply be due to the limits imposed by the technology of the time and the relatively reduced capacities of the states themselves where, for example, the collection of taxation could not be taken for granted in the way that is possible for modern states. It is precisely on the

¹⁰² *ibid.* p.161.

¹⁰³ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p.68.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.* pp.69-70.

basis of his treatment of the eighteenth century that critics have accused Morgenthau of a misguided nostalgia of the kind that George Kennan has confessed to from time to time.¹⁰⁵

Morgenthau may be on stronger ground in his treatment of the nineteenth century where there was at least some sort of consensual arrangement, even if it was based on not much more than a shared fear of the ideas unleashed by the French Revolution.¹⁰⁶ And in the form of Otto von Bismarck we have at least one example of a statesman who clearly did practice diplomacy on the basis of the need for a balance-of-power and who did his best to limit the excessive ambitions of some of those around him. A problem is raised, however, in Morgenthau's (widely shared) understanding that for much of this time Great Britain acted as the 'keeper-of-the-balance' in terms of the European balance-of-power. For those who subscribe to an adversarial balance-of-power the notion of a 'balancer' is deeply implausible.¹⁰⁷ Even those who do accept that the suggestion is a plausible one find it difficult to point to the phenomenon empirically. In an article on the role of the 'balancer' in the history of international politics Michael Sheehan is, however, unable to point to a single example of a state acting as a

¹⁰⁵ On Morgenthau and nostalgia see Griffiths, *Realism, Idealism and International Politics*, pp.72-73; Sollner, 'German Conservatism', p.172. Michael Oakshott complained that Morgenthau "writes sometimes as if he knew of a golden age in the past when European Society was strikingly more successful in dealing with its political problems than it now appears to be." See 'Scientific Politics', p.347. For Kennan's admission see his *American Diplomacy 1900-1950* (University of Chicago Press, 1951) pp.72-73 and *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (Oxford University Press, 1954). In his memoirs Kennan recalls "with embarrassment" a paper he wrote in 1939 which called for a return to the particularism of the nineteenth century(!) See his *Memoirs 1925-1950*, p.118.

¹⁰⁶ By the time Kissinger reaches the nineteenth century he too has recognised that "...the continental countries were knit together by a sense of shared values. There was not only a physical equilibrium, but a moral one." Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p.79. Robert Jervis describes "an unusually high and self-conscious level of cooperation among the major European powers." 'From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation', *World Politics*, Vol. XXXVIII, October 1985, p.59. Also see Richard B. Elrod, 'The Concert of Europe: A Fresh Look at an International System', *World Politics*, Vol. XXVIII, No.5, January 1976, pp.159-174.

¹⁰⁷ See for example Kenneth Waltz, 'Realpolitik and balance of power theory', in F.Greenstein and N.Polsby (eds.), *International Politics* (Harvard University Press, 1959).

'balancer' apart from Great Britain.¹⁰⁸ It is true that Morgenthau does recognise that unusual historical and geographical reasons enable Britain to perform this function but even so the whole idea of an associative balance-of-power clashes with his fundamental theoretical assumption that states seek to maximise their power.¹⁰⁹ This initial assumption only seems plausible when the balance-of-power is accepted as an unintended outcome.

There is, too, an extraordinary ambivalence about what he actually wants to claim on behalf of the balance-of-power. For more than four hundred years, he suggests, the policy (note the emphasis on intent) of the balance-of-power thwarted the hegemonic ambitions of individual states. It also succeeded in preserving the independence of all the members of the system from the Treaty of Westphalia until the partition of Poland in the late eighteenth century. Universal dominion has only been prevented, Morgenthau claims, at the price of 'virtually continuous' warfare between 1648 and 1815 plus two World Wars. And the two periods of relative stability from 1648 and 1815 were "preceded by the wholesale elimination of small states..."¹¹⁰ Given that Morgenthau suggests that the preservation of the independence of individual states is one of the most important functions of the balance-of-power, this obviously represents a point of considerable tension. Beyond this he acknowledges that there is, in fact, no way to judge whether the balance-of-power has actually served to minimise the frequency and intensity of warfare.¹¹¹ Given this scepticism it's difficult to understand why Morgenthau places so much store upon the revival of the balance-of-power in the twentieth century.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Sheehan, 'The place of the balancer in balance of power theory', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.15, No.2, April 1989, pp.123-134.

¹⁰⁹ The three factors which Morgenthau identified as enabling Britain to have acted as the balancer are its geographical remoteness, the fact that Britain had no vital interests to defend on the Continent, apart from the general one of preventing any power from attaining a continental hegemony which could threaten it and thirdly that Britain's empire gave it the opportunity of 'satisfying aspirations elsewhere.' Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p.275.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.* p.150.

¹¹¹ *ibid.* p.156.

A similar ambivalence pervades his treatment of the role of diplomacy. The reader will recall Michael Oakshott's criticism of the lack of attention which Morgenthau actually gave to diplomacy and diplomatic practice in *Scientific Man Vs. Power Politics*. This deficiency is addressed in *Politics Among Nations* but much of the two substantial sections that Morgenthau devotes to exploring the role of diplomacy and the proposals for its revival is disappointingly banal.¹¹² His 'four tasks of diplomacy' are straightforward enough but he has almost nothing to say about how they can be performed in an environment in the mid-twentieth century where "...diplomacy has lost its vitality, and its functions have withered away to such an extent as is without precedent in the history of the modern state system."¹¹³

He offers five factors to account for the decline of diplomacy since the First World War.¹¹⁴ Technological advances in communication have tended to turn overseas representatives into mere ciphers and made it easier for non-diplomats to intrude. This has been combined with a liberal distrust of traditional diplomatic negotiations conducted in private which has led to their replacement with "parliamentary procedures", as Morgenthau describes them, and the "open covenants... openly arrived at" described by Woodrow Wilson.

¹¹² Similarly, a later essay *The Art of Diplomatic Negotiation* doesn't actually appear to address the subject at all, directly or indirectly. See Morgenthau, 'The Art of Diplomatic Negotiation', in Leonard D. White (ed.), *The State of the Social Sciences* (University of Chicago Press, 1956) pp.404-414.

¹¹³ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, p.425. The four tasks of diplomacy are that :

" 1) Diplomacy must determine its objectives in the light of the power actually and potentially available for the pursuit of these objectives. 2) Diplomacy must assess the objectives of other nations and the power actually and potentially available for the pursuit of these objectives. 3) Diplomacy must determine to what extent these different objectives are compatible with each other. 4) Diplomacy must employ the means suited to the pursuit of its objectives." *ibid.* pp.425-430.

¹¹⁴ The longer standing element which he describes earlier in the book is the replacement of diplomats drawn from an aristocratic background with those thrown up by democratic processes. The quality of diplomats and diplomacy "...is best assured by dependence upon tradition and institutions rather than upon the sporadic appearance of outstanding individuals. It is to tradition that Great Britain owes the relative constancy of its power from Henry VIII to the First World War." *ibid.* p.107. Max Weber took the somewhat different view that the quality of British leadership was due precisely to its more open and competitive selection when compared with that of the German ruling elite.

The superpowers themselves have either lacked a long-standing diplomatic tradition, in the case of the United States, or have consciously destroyed that tradition in the case of Russia as a consequence of the Bolshevik Revolution. The most important factor in undermining diplomatic discourse is, however, "the crusading spirit of the new moral force of nationalistic universalism" which manifests itself in a context where wars can become "total" and "two gigantic power blocs face each other in inflexible opposition." The 'eight rules of diplomacy' which Morgenthau offers as a remedy, again, tell us nothing about how a discourse of diplomacy is to be articulated and maintained in the intersocietal conditions of the mid-twentieth century as Morgenthau defines them.¹¹⁵ It is, perhaps, understandable that at least one critic has seen this as little more than "a counsel of despair."¹¹⁶

We will return to 'Morgenthau and his critics' later in the chapter as part of a broader overview of his early books but for the moment I wish to turn my attention to the third of these, *In Defense of the National Interest*, first published in 1951.¹¹⁷ If we consider *Scientific Man* to have been Morgenthau's fundamental critique of political liberalism and *Politics Among Nations* as an

¹¹⁵ The 'eight rules of diplomacy' amount to:

A) 'Four Fundamental Rules': 1) "Diplomacy must be divested of the crusading spirit. 2) The objectives of foreign policy must be defined in terms of the national interest and must be supported with adequate power. 3) Diplomacy must look at the political scene from the point of view of other nations. 4) Nations must be prepared to compromise on all issues that are not vital to them"; and B) 'Four Prerequisites of Compromise' which are: 1) "Give up the shadow of worthless rights for the substance of real advantage. 2) Never put yourself in a position from which you cannot retreat without losing face and from which you cannot advance without grave risks. 3) Never allow a weak ally to make decisions for you. 4) The armed forces are the instrument of foreign policy, not its master." *Politics Among Nations*, pp.439-443.

It may well be that up to this point Morgenthau had simply not given very much attention to the problems of shaping foreign policy in a democracy like the United States with the added complication of its peculiar governmental structure based around a formal separation of powers. It is instructive that in the third edition of *Politics Among Nations* Morgenthau added a fifth "prerequisite of compromise" that "The Government is the leader of public opinion, not its slave." *Politics Among Nations*, (3rd edition 1960), p.567.

¹¹⁶ Griffiths, *Realism and Idealism*, p.72. I hope that in chapters three and four I will show that Morgenthau, through the way that he conducted his life as an intellectual, managed to rise above this 'counsel of despair'.

¹¹⁷ For an earlier affirmation of the importance of the national interest see Morgenthau, 'The Primacy of the National Interest', *American Scholar*, Vol.18, No.2, Spring, 1949, pp.207-216.

attempt, however problematic, to articulate an alternative world-view, in *In Defense of the National Interest* Morgenthau places this vision within the context of the diplomatic history and political institutions of the United States. Though *Politics Among Nations* is the book best known to posterity, *In Defense of the National Interest* attracted even more scholarly attention at the time and a relatively more hostile reception - hardly surprising given its fundamental challenge to the notion of American exceptionalism.

Morgenthau's central theme is the need for American statesmen to return to policies based firmly upon the pursuit of the national interest, thus enabling them to recapture the essence of American statecraft as it was practised at the foundation of the republic. This period amounted to America's own 'golden age' of diplomacy.¹¹⁸ In total Morgenthau identified three fundamental patterns in American foreign policy: the realistic - thinking and acting in terms of power (Alexander Hamilton); the ideological - thinking in terms of moral principles but acting in terms of power (Thomas Jefferson and John Quincy Adams); and the moralistic - thinking and acting in terms of moral principles (Woodrow Wilson).¹¹⁹ There is a rough correspondence, Morgenthau suggests, with three periods of American foreign policy: the first decade of the Republic; the nineteenth century up to the Spanish-American War; and the third -and moralistic - period from the turn of the century until 1950.

The first, realistic, period is best reflected by Alexander Hamilton, writing as 'Pacificus' and 'Americanus', against the 'Helvidius' of James Madison on the question of whether the United States should intervene on the

¹¹⁸ "...this generation of Americans must shed the illusions of its fathers and grandfathers and relearn the great principles of statecraft which guided the republic in the first decade and - in moralistic disguise - in the first century of its existence." Morgenthau, *American Foreign Policy*, (Methuen and Co., London, 1952) p.3. *In Defense of the National Interest* was published in the United Kingdom under the title of *American Foreign Policy* and I am drawing upon a copy of the latter. It is, in every other respect, identical to the American edition.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.* p.13. He stresses that this typology only refers to 'prevailing tendencies', ideal types as it were.

behalf on Revolutionary France against the coalition ranged against it in 1792. In opposition to the arguments of Madison - that the United States should fulfil its treaty obligations to a country whose aid had been critical in the War of Independence and which now sought to defend similar republican institutions - Hamilton "invoked the national interest of the United States."¹²⁰ In weighing up the likely consequences of American intervention both for France and for the United States, Hamilton "put the legalistic and moralistic arguments of the opposition led by Madison ... into the context of the concrete power situation in which the United States found itself on the international scene ..." and so helped resist the challenge to Washington's declaration of neutrality.¹²¹

The second period is marked by a disjuncture between thought and action in which American statesmen thought in terms of moral principles but behaved rather differently. Though Thomas Jefferson railed periodically against the iniquities of the balance-of-power he nonetheless found himself withdrawing his pro-French sympathies when Napoleon threatened to attain a continental hegemony. And in John Quincy Adams' period of office as Secretary of State and President, principles and interests formed "a harmonious whole" in terms of his foreign policy initiatives - freedom of the seas, the Monroe Doctrine, and Manifest Destiny. The "legal and moral principle of the freedom of the seas" became a political weapon to be used against British naval domination. The Monroe Doctrine's "moral postulates of anti-imperialism and mutual non-intervention" provided space for the United States to pursue a continental hegemony. Manifest Destiny provides "moral justification as well as moral incentive" for expansion in the West.¹²²

This rather fortuitous meeting of power and principle ends with the Spanish-American War in which McKinley, by annexing the Philippines,

¹²⁰ *ibid.* p.14.

¹²¹ *ibid.* p.18.

¹²² *ibid.* pp.19-23.

"leads the United States as a great world power beyond the confines of the Western Hemisphere, ignorant of the bearing of this step upon the national interest, and guided by moral principles completely divorced from the national interest." This utopian period is defined most clearly by Woodrow Wilson who "not only disregards the national interest, but is explicitly opposed to it on moral grounds."¹²³

Wilson could not however, like Thomas Jefferson before him, "discount completely the national interest of the United States." The "objective force of the national interest which no rational man could escape" led the United States through Wilson into war in 1917 in order to oppose the German threat to the balance-of-power in Europe - "the same reasons, only half-known to himself, for which Jefferson had wished and worked alternatively for the victory of England and France."¹²⁴ Wilson's moralising was, nonetheless, not without serious political consequences for, having met both his moral objective and the political interests of America with the defeat of Germany, Wilson failed to work towards the restoration of the balance-of-power, instead taking as his mission the responsibility for putting an end to power politics altogether. Faced with the opposition of his allies Wilson was forced into a series of 'uneasy compromises' which satisfied no-one and so "Wilson returned from Versailles a compromised idealist, an empty-handed statesman, a discredited ally. In that triple failure lies the tragedy not only of Wilson, a great yet misguided man, but of Wilsonianism as a political doctrine."¹²⁵

The Wilsonian legacy was maintained through Franklin Roosevelt and his Secretary of State Cordell Hull who possessed, according to Morgenthau, a lawyer's rather than a statesman's mental outlook.¹²⁶ As with Wilson, "the

¹²³ *ibid.* p.23.

¹²⁴ *ibid.* p.25.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* pp.26-27.

¹²⁶ *ibid.* pp. 31, 106.

impact of a national emergency upon common sense" meant that moral postulates could co-exist with the American national interest but problems arose when American leaders turned to think about the political constellation that was to be shaped following the defeat of Japan and Germany. Stalin and Churchill had acted with full cognisance of the balance-of-power which would be formed upon the conclusion of the war but Roosevelt had not with the result that the allies had failed to limit the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe, which would have been possible had it been made an explicit object of policy.¹²⁷ The Four Freedoms, the Atlantic Charter, and the United Nations proved to be no substitute for a cogent political strategy. Other more promising foreign policy initiatives had been compromised by their presentation in universal moral terms. In this manner, the Truman Doctrine "transformed a concrete interest of the United States in a geographically defined part of the world into a moral principle of worldwide validity, to be applied regardless of the limits of American interest and of American power."¹²⁸ Morgenthau concludes *In Defense of the National Interest* with an extraordinary and, for at least one critic, "painfully embarrassing" coda entitled 'Forget and Remember' which is reproduced in full below.¹²⁹

Forget and Remember!

" Forget the illusions of the recent past and remember the great and simple truths that the thoughts and actions of the early statesmen of the Republic have left you.

Forget the sentimental notion that foreign policy is a struggle between virtue and vice, with virtue bound to win.

Forget the utopian notion that a brave new world without power politics will follow the unconditional surrender of wicked nations.

¹²⁷ *ibid.* pp.32, 95-99.

¹²⁸ *ibid.* p.116.

¹²⁹ See James R. Newman's review of *In Defense of the National Interest*, 'The Balance of Power and the Voice of God', *New Republic*, August 13, 1951, p.19.

Forget the crusading notion that any nation, however virtuous and powerful, can have the mission to make the world over in its own image.

Remember that the golden age of isolated normalcy is gone forever and that no effort, however great, and no action, however radical, will bring it back.

Remember that diplomacy without power is feeble, and power without diplomacy is destructive and blind.

Remember that no nation's power is without limits, and hence that its policies must respect the power and interests of others.

Remember that the American people have shown throughout history that they are able to face the truth and act upon it with courage and resourcefulness in war, with common sense and moral determination in peace.

And, above all, remember always that it is not only a political necessity but also a moral duty for a nation to follow in its dealings with other nations but one guiding star, one standard for thought, one rule for action: The National Interest."¹³⁰

This sermon-like exhortation shows that at times the 'Realist Jeremiad' took an almost literal rather than metaphorical form.

Given the centrality of 'the national interest' for foreign policy the most surprising thing about the book is that Morgenthau devotes no time at all to fleshing out its constituent elements. For that the reader needs to turn to an article written at the end of 1952 in which Morgenthau attempts to meet this, and other, points of criticism.¹³¹ In response to the charge that the national interest was simply too elusive as a concept to enable it to be used as a foundation in the way that he does, Morgenthau conceded that "its content can run the whole gamut of meanings which are logically compatible with it" and "that content is determined by the political traditions and the total

¹³⁰ Morgenthau, *American Foreign Policy*, p.242.

¹³¹ Morgenthau, 'Another "Great Debate": The National Interest of the United States', *The American Political Science Review*, vol.XLVI, no.6, December 1952, pp.961-988.

cultural context within which a nation formulates its foreign policy."¹³² Even so the notion of interest is "the essence of politics" and universal and the national interest does retain "a residual meaning which is inherent in the concept itself." Given a competitive world of sovereign nations "the survival of a political unit, such as a nation, its identity is the irreducible minimum, the necessary element of its interests vis-s-vis other units. Taken in isolation, the determination of its content in a concrete situation is relatively simple; for it encompasses the integrity of the nation's territory, of its political institutions, and of its culture."¹³³

One may well agree with Morgenthau that 'national survival' provides a minimal content for the notion of the national interest but the problem is that in most cases this minimalist position will not provide a very useful guide to what states actually must, or should, do. Morgenthau asserts that the maintenance of the European balance-of-power has been an axiomatic component of the American national interest because only the rise of a Continental hegemon could present a threat to American national survival. Hence Jefferson, Wilson, and Roosevelt find themselves drawn inexorably, against their fundamental instincts, into supporting the balance-of-power in Europe. In truth, however, at no time since the middle of the nineteenth century at the very latest has the emergence of a threat from Europe to the territorial integrity of the United States been even the most remote possibility.¹³⁴ Not even in his most extravagant fantasies did Adolf Hitler

¹³² On other occasions, when pushed, Morgenthau would fall back on the notion of an objective national interest. In debate with Noam Chomsky some twenty years later he claimed that "I happen to believe that there is a possibility by rational political analysis to arrive at certain objective conclusions which define in broad terms what the national interest is and particularly to define in negative terms what it is not ... I indeed believe that if you did not assume that there exists an objective national interest, you wouldn't be capable of criticizing or approving of a particular foreign policy, either historical or contemporary..." Morgenthau and Noam Chomsky, 'The National Interest and the Pentagon Papers', *Partisan Review*, Vol.39, No.3, 1972, p.362.

¹³³ *ibid.* p.97.

¹³⁴ With the possible exception of European powers moving to take advantage of the Civil War.

contemplate the possibility of an invasion of the United States. Morgenthau's treatment of this period is deeply ahistorical and serves to obscure the fact that the internal debate over American intervention in World War One was a very real one, involving entirely legitimate and plausible choices in terms of what constituted the national interest of the United States. The same could be said of World War Two and, had Hitler not been so foolish as to make a declaration of war, it could still have been difficult for Roosevelt to secure an American involvement in the European theatre.

The idea of an axiomatic national interest is not even clear when it comes to the United Kingdom and Morgenthau's Chamberlain parable. It is at least a possibility that the survival of the United Kingdom as a nation-state could have been compatible with German continental hegemony.¹³⁵ As Michael Joseph Smith is also aware, Morgenthau was not convincing in his efforts to identify 'a rational core' of the national interest to be illuminated through objective analysis or, perhaps to be more precise, the core he did identify - national survival - could not plausibly serve as a foundation for the claims he made about state behaviour.¹³⁶ It is hardly surprising then that Morgenthau's assertions - whether part of a conscious policy of rhetorical overstatement or not - that international politics had 'iron laws' or that for statesmen not to believe in the idea of a balance-of-power was akin to "a scientist not believing in the law of gravity" merely served as a goad to his critics.¹³⁷ Perhaps more importantly it also helped to obscure the fact that Morgenthau could indeed make a plausible case for his contemporary understanding of what constituted the national interest of the United States, a case which was strengthened by the fact that, ironically, for the first time in over a hundred years the development of nuclear weapons in combination

¹³⁵ The suggestion that a British Empire could also have co-existed with Hitler's grand designs is a far more implausible counterfactual.

¹³⁶ See Michael Joseph Smith, 'Hans Morgenthau and the American National Interest in the Early Cold War', *Social Research*, Vol.48, No.4, Winter 1981, pp.777, 783-784.

¹³⁷ Morgenthau, *American Foreign Policy*, pp.32, 144.

with long-range bombers and, later, intercontinental ballistic missiles, had brought about a situation in which there was a direct threat to the security of the United States emanating from Europe. Under such circumstances Morgenthau's message of prudence and the avoidance of universal moral antagonisms was, indeed, an important one.

It remains for us to explore how this trilogy of books is situated within the broader contexts of American intellectual and political life, but for the moment we need to consider the critical reception of the books in their entirety and illuminate questions and problems not identified in the discussion so far.

Morgenthau's most forthright defender of recent times, Al Murray, has suggested that the extreme statements which Morgenthau has become notorious for were more polemical than considered and not a fair reflection of his broader opus.¹³⁸ Morgenthau intimated as much in the preface to the second edition of *Politics Among Nations*:

"When this book was originally written, that false and pernicious conception of foreign policy [liberalism/idealism] was still in the ascendancy. This book was indeed, and could be nothing else but, a frontal attack against that conception. It had to be as radical on the side of its philosophy as had been the errors on the other side. With that battle largely won, the polemic purpose can give way to the consolidation of a position that no longer needs to be attained, but only to be defended and adapted to new experiences."

He ends the preface by repeating Montesquieu's plea to his readers that "...they will not judge by a few hours reading of the labor of twenty years; that they will approve or condemn the book entire, and not a few particular phrases."¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Murray, 'Moral Politics', p.85.

¹³⁹ Morgenthau, 'Preface to the Second Edition', *Politics Among Nations* (3rd edition, 1960).

At times the careless use of language appears to be a source of confusion. Morgenthau's most notorious remark, frequently quoted by his critics, was that "there is a profound and neglected truth hidden in Hobbes's extreme dictum that the state creates morality as well as law and that there is neither morality nor law outside the state."¹⁴⁰ In a letter written to the *Journal of International Affairs* in October 1959 Morgenthau stressed that the operative words were "Hobbes's extreme dictum" rather than "a profound and neglected truth."¹⁴¹ The passage as it originally appeared in a journal article published a couple of years before *In Defense of the National Interest* appears to support this:

"However extreme Hobbes's dictum that the state creates morality as well as law, and that there is neither morality nor law outside the state, that dictum points to an important and neglected truth."¹⁴²

Thirdly, it is also true to say that part of the blame for misunderstandings lies with Morgenthau's reluctance to engage openly with his critics.¹⁴³ One can empathise with his frustration, expressed in the preface to the third edition of *Politics Among Nations* and cited earlier, that he continued to be accused of "indifference to the moral problem" - a suggestion which, as I have already demonstrated, is manifestly untrue. Some critics did, however, have legitimate questions which Morgenthau often rather casually dismissed out of hand. In a review article examining the first three books Robert Tucker points to the uneasy tension between free will and determinism which sees Morgenthau attempting to use the national interest as both an axiomatic guide to the way that states actually behave and a

¹⁴⁰ Morgenthau, *American Foreign Policy*, p.34.

¹⁴¹ See Morgenthau's letter to the editor, April 22, 1959, in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 29.

¹⁴² Morgenthau, 'The Primacy of the National Interest', *American Scholar*, Vol.18, No.2, Spring 1949, p.210.

¹⁴³ He once suggested in a letter that "academic controversies are a waste of time". Letter to Mrs Caughey, June 2 1967, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 9.

normative guide to what they should do.¹⁴⁴ Morgenthau refers to this review in one of his articles (in a footnote!) and suggests that "it ought not to need special emphasis that a principle of social conduct, in contrast to a law of nature, allows of, and even presupposes, conduct in violation of the principle. Robert W. Tucker ... has missed this and many other points in his zeal to find contradictions where there are none."¹⁴⁵

If this is true then why refer to 'iron laws' at all? How does a 'law' pertaining to the social sphere differ from a 'law' of nature? What evidence would be required and accepted in order to refute (falsify?) a social law? If it is of limited value to account for foreign policy on the basis of the motives of statesmen why should we bother, as Morgenthau advocates, to "look over his shoulder when he writes his dispatches" or "listen in on his conversation with other statesmen?"¹⁴⁶ Morgenthau simply ignored these legitimate questions.

That there are deep-rooted methodological and epistemological problems is undeniable and many of these are a function of his Weberian position and are similar to those identified in the earlier discussion of Weber. However as Michael Joseph Smith is also aware, Morgenthau is often tempted to push past the limits of what Weber thought possible for social science and this weakens the overall plausibility of his claims.¹⁴⁷

The other factor which runs against the view that Morgenthau's more extreme claims were the product of an early form of polemical overstatement is that there are many more of them to be found in the later works - *In Defense of the National Interest* and the second edition of *Politics Among Nations* - rather than in *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics* and the first edition of *Politics*

¹⁴⁴ Robert Tucker, 'Professor Morgenthau's Theory of Political "Realism"', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.46, No.1, 1952, p.216.

¹⁴⁵ Morgenthau, 'Another Great Debate', p.962. In a letter written a few years later Morgenthau suggested that he made no detailed response to the Tucker article "...because I thought it was so weak a criticism as not to deserve a reply. There is no writer, living or dead, who cannot be exposed to this kind of hair-splitting argument." Letter to John B. Loeb, August 9 1956, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 34.

¹⁴⁶ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 3rd edition 1960, pp.5-6.

¹⁴⁷ Smith, *Realist Thought*, p.144.

Among Nations. It is not, for example, until the second edition of *Politics Among Nations* that Morgenthau's well-known 'six principles of political realism' appear, the first of which announces that "Political Realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature."¹⁴⁸ A number of commentators have expressed a preference for what Robert Gilpin has described as "the earlier and intuitive Morgenthau" of *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics* rather than the Morgenthau of *Politics Among Nations*.¹⁴⁹ Even Kenneth Thompson, one of Morgenthau's closest confidants, felt it necessary to raise the issue with him.¹⁵⁰

If then, these problems cannot be explained away, can they at least be better understood? I have already drawn attention to the difficulties inherent in a Weberian position. An additional consideration is that many of these books were written with the needs of a very wide readership in mind. Is *Politics Among Nations* best seen as a textbook for undergraduates, a manual of statecraft or, as Morgenthau himself - perhaps rather ambitiously - described it, "a permanent guide for the intelligent observer of international politics"?¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, 3rd edition 1960, p.4. For a critical rejection of the six principles see Stanley Hoffmann, 'Notes on the Limits of "Realism"', *Social Research*, XLVII, Winter, 1981, pp.653-659. The most pernicious legacy of Morgenthau's introduction of the six principles is that it has encouraged students and, more seriously, (would-be) academics - who should know better - that one only needs to read the relevant pages of the second edition of *Politics Among Nations* in order to be able to reach an understanding of Morgenthau. See for example Hans-Karl Pichler's wretched article 'The Godfathers of Truth' (cited earlier) in which he bases his analysis on the six principles which he conveniently (indolently?) claims to constitute "a summary of the epistemological and ontological assumptions on which Morgenthau's work is based." (p.187.)

¹⁴⁹ Robert Gilpin, 'The richness of the tradition of political realism', p.292. See also Murray, 'Moral Politics', p.94. and Richard Ashley, 'The poverty of neorealism', *International Organization*, Vol.38, No.2, 1984, pp.225-286. One should keep in mind, however, that intellectual tensions were present from the beginning.

¹⁵⁰ "... there is this problem: in *Scientific Man* you question the scientific method, in *Politics* [Among Nations] you come close to establishing the boundaries of a science of politics - in your own words... I feel that sooner or later you will be obliged to say something about this important problem." See the letter from Kenneth Thompson, March 1954, Box 57, *Morgenthau Papers*.

¹⁵¹ A referee feared its corrupting influence upon the young:

"... it will take skillful and constructive teaching to avoid doing a lot of damage to the social outlook of unsophisticated youngsters." (!) See Harold Sprout's letter to Roger Shugg of December 24, 1947, held in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 121.

There is evidence in the *Morgenthau Papers* of some tension between Morgenthau and Roger Shugg, his editor at the publishers Alfred A. Knopf, over the question of who the book was actually being written for. Morgenthau's description of a 'permanent guide' appears in a letter written in response to correspondence from Shugg in which the latter suggested the employment of a stylist and reminded Morgenthau that "we are trying to reach a rather large American undergraduate audience with your book" and that "they will complain about any work that is not crystal clear in its writing." Morgenthau suspected, probably correctly, that the real target of the editor was content rather than style and he complained that it was not possible "to translate a theoretical work on international politics into the language of a high school text without taking the mind and soul out of it." He also took a swipe at one of the other books on the market in warning that "a theoretical work cannot have the same instantaneous mass appeal as, let me say, Schuman's translation of the content of the New York Times into the language of Richard Wagner." (!)¹⁵²

I don't wish to make too much of this point but it is at least a possibility that, for example, the six principles of political realism could be better understood as a pedagogical and organisational device rather than as a grand ontological statement. It is also understandable that others have seen *Politics Among Nations* as a manual of statecraft, given section headings like 'How to detect and counter an imperialistic policy.'¹⁵³

Beyond this multiplicity of purpose, however, is Morgenthau's clear moral sense and it is his strong strain of idealism, his sense of what man ought to be rather than is, that helps to account for so much that is contradictory in his work. The idealist Morgenthau wishes to open up the

¹⁵² This is a clear reference to Frederick Schuman's *International Politics* (1933) which was, perhaps, the first textbook of international politics to be issued in the United States. For the above correspondence see Roger W. Shugg's letter to Morgenthau of January 8, 1948 and Morgenthau's reply of January 10 in Box 121 of the *Morgenthau Papers*.

¹⁵³ Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, first edition 1948, p.39.

space for human agency through diplomatic intercourse, but the realist Morgenthau is sceptical of such a possibility under the conditions of modernity. The idealist Morgenthau sees that historical contingency opens up space for the exercise of free will but the realist Morgenthau is aware of the existence of iron laws of politics and the perennial tragedy of the political. It may well be, as Peter Gay has suggested with reference to Meinecke, that the very idea of power as a tragic phenomenon is a "habit inherited from German idealism."¹⁵⁴ This is fundamentally the same point made by Michael Oakshott and echoed by Martin Griffiths when the latter claims that Morgenthau's abstraction of 'political man' from 'real man' is idealistic.¹⁵⁵ We have already seen how Morgenthau's emphasis on the importance of cognition and the existence of something like an innate moral sense in human beings streaked his vision with an idealism that rested uneasily with his realism. In his more lucid moments he recognised too, in sharp contrast with his regular use of the Chamberlain parable, that "what separates the "utopian" from the "realist" position cannot be so sharply expressed in terms of alternative foreign policies. The very same policies can be and are being supported by both schools of thought. What sets them apart is not necessarily a matter of practical judgement, but of philosophies and standards of thought."¹⁵⁶ This suggests that the relationship between idealism and realism in international politics is, at the very least, more problematic than has been portrayed in most treatments of the discipline's evolution.

With this in mind recent efforts to question the plausibility of treating the history of the subject as a series of 'great debates' between irreconcilables have been welcome. One of the most important of these has been the David

¹⁵⁴ Gay calls it an 'unfortunate habit'. See Gay, *Weimar Culture*, p.93.

¹⁵⁵ Griffiths, *Realism, Idealism, and International Politics*, p.66. On the general theme of Morgenthau's idealism see Hoffmann, 'Notes on the Limits of "Realism"' p.657 and George Liska, 'Morgenthau and Machiavelli: Political Realism and Power Politics', in *Truth and Tragedy*, p.111

¹⁵⁶ Morgenthau, 'Another Great Debate', p.961.

Long and Peter Wilson edited collection of essays *Thinkers of the twenty years crisis: inter-war idealism reassessed* which has served, as Wilson suggests, to stress "both the uncertainty as to the nature and scope of idealism as a category and who the idealists actually were."¹⁵⁷ The contributors to this book have reminded us of the richness and variety of the thinkers who in the past have been lumped together by critics like Morgenthau and Carr. Wilson juxtaposes a more conservative wing of 'idealism' (Davies, Lothian, and Zimern) against a more radical wing (Hobson, Woolf, Mitrany). Federalist approaches to integration competed with the functionalist. Scholars placed very different emphases on the relative importance of international law and free trade as instruments of peace.¹⁵⁸ Many 'idealists' were as state-centric as the 'realists'.¹⁵⁹

Brian Schmidt has argued that the successive phases of liberalism and realism represent "reified intellectual constructs" where analytical traditions have been conflated with real historical ones.¹⁶⁰ At a minimum Schmidt suggests that a clear division between interwar scholars and the first generation of realists "cannot withstand much critical scrutiny."¹⁶¹ At another level Rob Walker has pointed out that the normal juxtaposition in the 'great debates' of a relativist realism and a universalist idealism must at least be questionable when so many realists have themselves "been challenged on the ground of historicism and difference."¹⁶² Morgenthau was himself, as I have already shown, ready to use realism as a relativistic weapon against the universalist claims of idealism whilst simultaneously, and in a much stronger

¹⁵⁷ Peter Wilson, 'Introduction: The Twenty Years' Crisis and the Category of 'Idealism' in International Relations', in Peter Wilson and David Long (eds.) *Thinkers of the twenty years' crisis: interwar idealism reassessed* (Oxford University Press, 1999) p.14.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.* p.20.

¹⁵⁹ David Long, 'Conclusion: Inter-War Idealism, Liberal Internationalism, and the Contemporary International Theory', in *ibid.* p.305.

¹⁶⁰ Brian C. Schmitt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998) pp.22-25.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* p.191.

¹⁶² Walker, *Inside/Outside*, p.30.

way than, say, EH Carr, offering an alternative set of universal claims. Similarly the claims of different pluralistic societies and their particular national interests can, at least in principle Morgenthau suggests, be reconciled but only through a universalistic discourse known as diplomacy. The very idea of 'tolerance' which Morgenthau considers essential to a pluralistic, competitive society of states is itself necessarily bound to a kind of universal empathetic principle.

These revisionist accounts have been a welcome corrective to earlier narratives but if in some respects they have gone too far it is precisely because they have been written as 'disciplinary histories' which ignore the fact that international relations has a much broader context in terms of the social sciences. This is especially so in the United States where political science predated International Relations in a formal, institutional sense. Looking at political realism through this wider contextual lens will enable us to appreciate how it was that Morgenthau's works were so controversial in the United States. As Morgenthau has suggested it was, indeed, in terms of "philosophies and standards of thought" that his brand of political realism appeared so distinct.

The American Science of Politics

To speak of the 'American science of politics' is not to suggest that Americans retain a monopoly upon the study of politics, nor even that Americans were necessarily the first to think of politics as a science. Just to take a couple of examples, one could point to the impact of the Scottish Enlightenment and others have pointed to Machiavelli as the founder of political science.¹⁶³ What I do want to suggest, however, is that in no other

¹⁶³ For the Scottish Enlightenment as foundation see James Farr, 'Political Science and the Enlightenment of Enthusiasm', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.82, No.1, March 1988, pp.51-69.

country has the science of politics - understood as a subject which draws upon the methodological and epistemological practices of the natural sciences - been pursued with such enthusiasm, within such a vast institutional framework. This enthusiasm is itself the product of a broader commitment to a mutually reinforcing triptych of liberalism, science, and progress. This is, no doubt, what Rolf Dahrendorf had in mind when he described America as 'The Applied Enlightenment'.¹⁶⁴ It goes almost without saying that the European experience has been a dramatically different one, as I described in chapter one. Not even in Britain - the birthplace of the industrial and scientific revolutions - has there been such an unambiguous commitment to modernity. Nor - whether or not the 'founding fathers' are to be drawn from the Scottish Enlightenment - has the British academy ever been anything more than cool towards the suggestion that politics could be approached with the same intellectual tools appropriate to the natural sciences. This has been, broadly understood, a peculiarly American enthusiasm. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a comprehensive history of political science in the United States but I do think it important to at least provide a sketch and suggest how it relates to the broader intellectual and social climate.

In the most general terms over the course of the nineteenth century the sheer weight and importance of scientific innovation and discovery wore down the resistance to placing science at the centre of university life. Faced with works of the importance of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* the defenders of a classical or religious centred education were slowly forced to give ground.¹⁶⁵ The study of politics began to expand steadily after the Civil War before accelerating in the late nineteenth century and, even more, during the twentieth century. David Ricci has suggested that there were three broad

¹⁶⁴ Dahrendorf quoted in Stanley Hoffmann, *Janus and Minerva: essays in the theory and practice of International Politics* (Westview Press, Boulder, 1987) p.8.

¹⁶⁵ David Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1984) pp.36-37.

stages in the growth of the discipline from the late nineteenth century until the Second World War. In the first of these, from 1880 to 1900, political scientists succeeded in establishing programmes of political studies as a legitimate part of the university curriculum while its practitioners continued to rely, in the main, upon older research methods drawn from comparative history. The second period from 1900 to 1920 was dominated by professionalisation and specialisation as political science sought to establish itself as a subject distinct from history, economics, and sociology. In the third period from 1920 to 1940 Ricci suggests that "the emphasis on science finally came of age" as modern research methods were introduced by a new generation of scholars.¹⁶⁶ It is possible that Ricci exaggerates the nature of the change in this third period for, as we shall see, the new scientism did meet with some intellectual resistance and the new methods introduced were not as widely employed as Ricci implies. It was not until the rise of the behavioural movement from the mid 1940s that scientism was consolidated as the primary methodological framework.

Though a chair in History and Political Science had been established for Francis Lieber at Columbia as early as 1857 it was not until 1880, after some struggle, that John Burgess was able to establish the first school of political science in the United States, at Columbia. This took place, as Ricci has pointed out, in the broader context of intensifying professionalisation and specialisation across American society. In academe this was reflected by the establishment of a host of new professional organisations: The American Historical Association in 1884; the American Economic Association in 1885; The American Statistical Association in 1888; and The American Academy of Political and Social Science in 1889, which itself was to give way to more specialised organisations in the form of the American Sociological Society and the American Political Science Association in 1901 and 1903 respectively.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.* p.77.

In terms of the content and research methods of this science of politics greater specialisation was to follow later but for the moment an important shift occurred, based on a commitment to empiricism and the adoption of a rhetorical scientism. In his *The American Commonwealth* of 1888 James Bryce announced that his purpose was "to paint the institutions and people of America as they are ... to avoid temptations of the deductive method and to simply present the facts of the case ..." A later work presented this claim in even starker terms: "it is facts that are needed, Facts, Facts, Facts."¹⁶⁷ Elsewhere, Bryce criticised Alexis de Tocqueville's now famous *Democracy in America* on the basis that "what he has given us is not so much a description of the country and the people as a treatise, full of fine observation and elevated thinking..."¹⁶⁸ The subtext, as Bernard Crick points out, is perfectly clear: de Tocqueville was an dilettantish aristocrat and not a serious student of politics.¹⁶⁹

This scientism, as yet, was little more than a call for scholarly enquiry to be pursued in a serious and dispassionate way. The primary method employed continued to be the historical/comparative one even if Woodrow Wilson had called for political scientists to look beyond documents and archives to "real events, real people, and real political life."¹⁷⁰ Wilson's call found an echo in the early part of the twentieth century in the work of so-called 'muckraking' journalists like Upton Sinclair and the young Walter Lippmann who sought to uncover what they saw as the objective, and often uncomfortable, truths lurking beneath the institutional veneer of American government and business. These 'muckrakers' clearly provided a source of

¹⁶⁷ Bryce quoted in Evron M. Kirkpatrick, 'The Impact of the Behavioral Approach on Traditional Political Science', in Austin Ranney (ed.), *Essays on the Behavioral Study of Politics* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana, 1962) p.8.

¹⁶⁸ Bryce quoted in Bernard Crick, *The American Science of Politics* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959) p.115.

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Wilson quoted in Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus, *American Political Science: From Burgess to Behaviorism* (Allyn and Bacon Inc, Boston, 1967) p.32.

inspiration for the following generation of sociologists and political scientists.¹⁷¹

In the academy the calls for a science of politics to be modelled along the lines of the natural sciences became ever more strident. One of the best examples of this was provided by William Bennett Munro in his 1927 presidential address to the American Political Science Association. While the natural sciences had, Munro noted, "... moved a long way... from the teachings of Galileo and Newton ... too many political scientists are still dallying fondly with the abstract formalism of Locke and Montesquieu, Austin, Blackstone, and Bentham."¹⁷² Pointing to the revolution wrought by quantum theory in physics Munro implored that in political science "our immediate goal, therefore, should be to release political science from the old metaphysical and juristic concepts upon which it has traditionally been based... It is to the natural sciences that we may most profitably turn ... for suggestions as to the reconstruction of our postulates and methods."¹⁷³ His call for new methods was being answered even as he spoke. The period from 1920 to 1940 witnessed the introduction of the sort of scientific methods that the post World War Two generation of scholars would come to take for granted. Charles Merriam and Harold Gosnell's *Non Voting: Causes and Methods of Control* was "the first major study in political science to use both random sampling and the statistics of attributes."¹⁷⁴ A plethora of titles incorporating new methodological techniques followed in quick succession.¹⁷⁵

This same period also saw the establishment and expansion of institutional structures to support these new scientific undertakings. Three 'National Conferences on the Science of Politics' held in the years 1923-1925

¹⁷¹ Crick, *American Science*, pp.83-84.

¹⁷² William Bennett Munro, 'Physics and Politics - An Old Analogy Revised', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.XXII, No.1, February 1928, p.3.

¹⁷³ *ibid.* p.10

¹⁷⁴ Barry D. Karl, *Charles E. Merriam and the Study of Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1974) p.148.

¹⁷⁵ Somit and Tanenhaus, *American Political Science*, p.127.

gave the process an additional momentum.¹⁷⁶ A Social Science Research Council was founded in 1923 and by the end of the decade had provided well over four million dollars in grants for research in social science largely drawing upon the financial resources of the foundations established through the munificence of the 'Robber-Barons' Carnegie, Rockefeller and others.¹⁷⁷ Foundation money was also flowing through to political science in the universities. The new social science building at the University of Chicago was established with a large grant from the Rockefeller foundation.¹⁷⁸ The single extraordinary figure linking all of these developments was Charles Merriam who was one of the first of the empire builders who were beginning to appear on the scene in American higher education. If there is a 'founding father' of American political science it is Charles Merriam.

The range of his activities was astonishing. As an academic he was the author and co-author of numerous publications during a career in higher education spanning more than fifty years. He joined the Department of Political Science at the University of Chicago in 1900 and served as its chairman from 1923 until 1940 when he, as Kenneth Thompson has rather archly observed, "gave up the title if not the power."¹⁷⁹ He was co-founder of the Social Science Research Council and President of the American Political Science Association in 1925. He was the first individual to bring corporate and governmental philanthropy to research in politics. He served on numerous governmental committees and advisory boards. His interest in political life extended well beyond the boundaries of the ivory tower. As a young, Progressive activist his biographer describes him "tramp[ing] up and down stairs in tenement sweatshops, attend[ing] labor union meetings, and

¹⁷⁶ *ibid.* p.87.

¹⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion see Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp.118-139.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.* p.136.

¹⁷⁹ Kenneth Thompson, *Schools of Thought in International Relations: Interpreters, Issues, and Morality* (Louisiana State University Press, 1996) p.10.

[teaching] a course in economics in the John Elliott settlement house."¹⁸⁰ He was an Alderman on the Chicago City Council from 1909 to 1917 and lost a closely contested mayoral election in 1911 in which his victorious opponent was widely suspected of having benefited from various forms of fraudulent practice.¹⁸¹

Crick suggests that, the demise of Woodrow Wilson - the ultimate scholar in politics - and the end of the Progressive Era symbolised by the election to the Presidency of the venal Warren Harding led Merriam to retreat from direct political activities in order to "construct a genuine science of politics that would make 'jungle' politics impossible."¹⁸² There is, no doubt, some merit to this thesis but it is also the case that Merriam never renounced his belief in the importance of scholars retaining an active commitment to the shaping of political life, however problematic this may prove to be in practical terms. And this new science of politics with its more sophisticated research methods based on the actual behaviour of men and institutions was to be placed at the service of government. A science *of* politics was a science *for* politics.

We also need to keep in mind, however, that there was some resistance to this new scientism. Men like William Elliot, Edward Corwin, and Charles Beard opposed scientism on much the same grounds as so-called 'traditionalists' opposed 'behavioralists' in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁸³ Corwin, as early as 1929, felt able to question the achievement to date of "the new political science." He found in the works published so far "an immense unlimbering of apparatus, an immense polishing of a technique already spotless; but it was all apparently for the game itself. The problems set were of no great evident moment, and the solutions provided either were

¹⁸⁰ Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, p.31.

¹⁸¹ *ibid.* p.71.

¹⁸² Crick, *American Science of Politics*, p.134.

¹⁸³ Many of the participants in the latter debate appeared to be entirely unaware of this earlier dispute.

inconclusive or merely substantiated what might have been the off-hand verdict of any rather intelligent and well-read observer."¹⁸⁴ One could level precisely this criticism against many of the post-World War Two behavioural projects.¹⁸⁵ Corwin also warned that a value-free political science was a utopian ambition that was neither possible nor desirable.¹⁸⁶

A similar thesis was advanced by Charles Beard who was undoubtedly the most prominent of these critics of the new scientism. Beard had himself begun his academic career as an opponent of the arid institutionalism and neo-Hegelian state worship of John Burgess and others and had welcomed a more 'behaviorally' minded subject accordingly. He had also held Merriamesque hopes for the combination of political study and practice. With the demise of Progressivism, however, Beard came to take a rather different view.¹⁸⁷ Far from advocating the marriage of intellect to power he now came to believe that the former should have an inherent mistrust of the latter. He also thought that a healthy interest in the real behaviour of men and institutions had degenerated into an arid scientism. Echoing, no doubt unconsciously, Weber's claim that Americans had a tendency to 'romanticise' numbers Beard suggested that it was a fundamental weakness of American scholarship to assume "that when once the 'data' have been assembled important conclusions will flow from observing them - conclusions akin in inevitability to those of physics or mathematics."¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁴ Edward S. Corwin, 'The Democratic Dogma and the Future of Political Science', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. XXIII, August 1929, pp. 588-589. From across the Atlantic Harold Laski was already lambasting the American "...tendency to judge men by the volume of published output ... a facile test of promotion naturally welcome to busy administrators." Laski quoted in Somit and Tanenhaus, *American Political Science*, p. 92. This 'facile test of promotion' is now a normal administrative method in the United Kingdom as well.

¹⁸⁵ In *International Relations the Correlates of War* project stands out as a monument to the most pointless kind of relentless empiricism. See John Lewis Gaddis, 'International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War', *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 3, Winter 92/93, pp. 5-59.

¹⁸⁶ pp. 582, 591.

¹⁸⁷ Raymond Seidelman, *Disenchanted Realists* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1985) pp. 66, 85-86.

¹⁸⁸ Beard quoted in Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, p. 223. On Weber's claim see Scaff, *Fleeing the Iron Cage*, p. 227.

Beard's most public challenge to the new scientism was made in his 1926 presidential address '*Time, Technology, and the Creative Spirit in Political Science*' which, given that it followed Merriam's vastly different presidential address of the preceding year, amounted to something of a direct reply to Merriam as well.¹⁸⁹ The essential theme of his address was that the quest to establish the study of politics as a scientific, value-free undertaking was misguided. As a historian, and some fifty years before Hayden White, Beard pointed out that a process of selection was an inevitable part of any historical investigation, no matter how painstaking the commitment to the empirical. The 'facts' never selected themselves and hence there was no way for the historian - or the political scientist - to avoid normative considerations.¹⁹⁰ Positivist commitments also left many aspects of social life unexamined. Research undertaken "under scientific formulas in things mathematically measurable or logically describable leaves untouched a vast array of social forces..."¹⁹¹ The inductive method "discourages the use of that equally necessary method - the deductive and imaginative process which often makes the poet or artist a better fore-teller and statesman than the logical master of detail and commonsense."¹⁹² Beard also sought to defend the relevance of what later came to be called 'the Canon'. "By common consent", asks Beard rhetorically, "are not Aristotle, Machiavelli, and the authors of *The Federalist* giants?"¹⁹³ For the moment then the new scientism, though it had made important intellectual and institutional inroads, was by no means unchallenged, nor had the new research methodologies come to be as widely employed as Ricci has suggested.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Charles A. Beard, 'Time, Technology, and the Creative Spirit in Political Science', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, February 1927, pp. 1-11.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.* p. 7.

¹⁹¹ *ibid.* p. 9.

¹⁹² *ibid.* p. 9.

¹⁹³ *ibid.* p. 10.

¹⁹⁴ On this point see John G. Gunnell, 'American Political Science, Liberalism, and the Invention of Political Theory', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, No. 1, March 1988, p. 74.

In fact, scientism moved to its apogee in the twenty-five years from 1940 to 1965 rather than the period from 1920 to 1940. This expansion was encouraged by a number of sociological and institutional factors, the most important of which was undeniably the massive growth in the size of the Federal Government in the United States. This had begun with the New Deal but it was the Second World War and the Cold War which produced a dramatic increase in the size of government; a process which was further intensified by the ambitious social welfare programmes of the 1960s. The need for a new army of bureaucrats, policy advisers, and committee members offered opportunities to academics who could produce research with an explicitly instrumental and quantitative bias. As one participant in the debate between 'traditionalists' and 'behaviouralists' put it openly:

"In choosing between traditionalists and behavioralists the government official will be asking specialised questions, and he will prefer precise answers. Insofar as behavioralists follow the canons of scientific enquiry they undoubtedly will be given priority..."¹⁹⁵

Beyond Political Science it was generally the case that Federal Government funding was strongly biased towards "the social sciences deemed worthy of the appellation 'behavioral sciences' " and large sums were channelled through the Social Science Research Council's Committee on Political Behavior.¹⁹⁶

The trend was encouraged by the Foundations which had continued to grow in size and number following the Second World War. Most of them favoured behavioral projects on the same grounds as official bodies: 'results' or at least the promise of such. The Ford Foundation established an explicitly

¹⁹⁵ The sentence continues "even though our discipline has not reached such an advance stage that results of research will be as solid a basis for decisions as those in many branches of physics." (!) That the author would even suggest such a comparison shows a striking level of ambition. See Michael Haas, 'A Plan for Bridge Building in International Relations', in Klaus Knorr and James N. Rosenau (eds.), *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1969) p.172.

¹⁹⁶ Somit and Tanenhaus, *American Political Science*, p.184.

named Behavioral Science Program and was a particularly large donor.¹⁹⁷ The period also witnessed a massive increase in the size of American Higher Education generally and Political Science and International Relations in particular were also beneficiaries of this process. The creation of new departments and the influx of new scholars helped to weaken resistance to the new methodological practices, as did the example of relatively new disciplines like Psychology and Sociology. Finally, the emergence of computer technology encouraged quantitative methodology as did the growth of public opinion polling and other forms of sampling and marketing.

It has been suggested that the use of the term 'behavioral science' or 'behavioralism' in Political Science owes its origins to the University of Chicago where a group of social scientists were anxious that federal funding bodies not confuse social science with socialism (!) and hence conceived the term 'behavioral science'.¹⁹⁸ The general appellation had a much wider currency. Edwin Corwin, some twenty years earlier, had pointed to the influence of psychology and in particular John Watson's 1912 publication *Behaviorism* which sought to place that subject on a more inductive footing.¹⁹⁹

The question of what political scientists had in mind for a 'behavioral science' of politics was made clearer in the early 1950s. In 1953 the Behavioral Sciences Division of the Ford Foundation announced a large package of funding to support a detailed survey of "...a small group of American universities selected from among those providing leadership in [the behavioral] field to take a systematic look at the state of the behavioral sciences at their institutions and to express their needs in terms of detailed plans for development and improvement."²⁰⁰ Of fifteen initial candidates five

¹⁹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *ibid.* p.183.

¹⁹⁹ Corwin, 'Democratic Dogma', pp.583-586.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Arthur W. Macmahon's review of *A Report on the Behavioral Sciences at the University of Chicago* (University of Chicago Press, 1954); *The Behavioral Sciences at Harvard*:

institutions - Chicago, Harvard, Michigan, North Carolina and Stanford - were awarded \$50,000 each to undertake year-long surveys.

Though by no means unanimous in terms of what they understood 'behavioral science' to mean and the subject areas it covered, two broad themes did emerge. The first of these was the preference given to the monitoring of observed and observable behaviour and hence a commitment to the use of empirical methods. The Harvard Committee suggested that behavioral studies were "those involving direct, empirical observation of how people behave in particular situations."²⁰¹ The second thematic point of argument was that a sharp distinction should be drawn between empirical explanation and ethical evaluation, between subjective and objective, between is and ought. The North Carolina report suggested that a behavioral science of politics necessarily "means a departure from the normative character of much research in political science."²⁰² The Chicago report committed behavioural science to the "objective description of regularities." As for the value of 'ideas': "An idea is good not simply because it is exciting, not just because it is about some socially important problem with consequences for action; to be good an idea must also be true in the sense that it generates non-contradictory predictions which are confirmed and it is important that it generates many such predictions."²⁰³

This characteristically ambitious claim on the part of the University of Chicago was echoed by its members in other fora. In testimony given to the 1945 Senate Hearings on Science Legislation the Chicago sociologist William Ogburn made the grandiose claim that behavioral science could "aid in the

Report by a Faculty Committee (Harvard University Press, 1954); *Survey of the Behavioral Sciences: Report of the Faculty Committee and Report of the Visiting Committee* (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1954); *The University of North Carolina Survey of Behavioral Science 1953-1954* (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1954); *The Stanford Survey of the Behavioral Sciences 1953-1954: Report of the Executive Committee and Staff* (Stanford University, 1955); in *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. XLIX, No.3, 1955, p.857.

²⁰¹ *ibid.* p.860.

²⁰² *ibid.* p.861.

²⁰³ *ibid.* p.860.

national defense."²⁰⁴ Prominent intellectual representatives of the new approach included Harold Lasswell, Herbert Simon, (whose 1947 publication *Administrative Behavior* was a prominent example of the new literature) Gabriel Almond and David Truman.

To see that there were important differences in comparison with the period of 1920-1940 one has only to return to the figure of Charles Merriam. Though Merriam was a driving force behind the new scientism he was himself a generalist who avoided the use of the term 'science' in his own works and who was by no means a methodological purist.²⁰⁵ His biographer relates that, upon returning from an extended summer absence, Merriam was furious to discover that at the behest of William Ogburn the new Social Science Research Building was engraved with the maxim 'When you cannot measure, your knowledge is meagre and unsatisfactory'. For Merriam measurement could only ever be one element, albeit an important one, of the intellectual armoury of the student of politics.²⁰⁶

It was, nevertheless, the Chicago Department of Political Science which became most closely associated with behaviouralism and it was no small irony that Hans Morgenthau found himself here in 1943. A number of authors have seen both Morgenthau and political realism as entirely compatible with this new scientism. As Chris Brown has put it "... in retrospect it seems clear that the movement for science was not merely compatible with realism, but actually preordained by the realist view of the world ..."²⁰⁷ Hollis and Smith, too, see realism as lying "squarely in the scientific tradition" and Morgenthau himself as a "positivist."²⁰⁸ Robert Gilpin

²⁰⁴ Ogburn quoted by James Farr, 'Remembering the Revolution: Behavioralism in American Political Science', in James Farr, John S. Dryzick and Stephen T. Leonard (eds.), *Political Science in history: research programs and political traditions* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) p.211.

²⁰⁵ Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp.114-115.

²⁰⁶ *ibid.* p.155.

²⁰⁷ Brown, *International Relations*, p.99.

²⁰⁸ Hollis and Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, pp.10, 22. See also William C. Olson and A.J.R. Groom, *International Relations then and now* (Routledge, London,

has accepted that Morgenthau can be found on both sides of the traditionalist/scientist fence.²⁰⁹ Others have, perhaps wisely, simply pushed Morgenthau with all his difficulties to one side. It is surely no accident that Morgenthau is barely mentioned in an article in which Robert Jackson juxtaposes - favourably - the 'classical humanist realism' of Hedley Bull against the 'contemporary positivist realism' of Kenneth Waltz, even though Jackson sees the English School itself as a closely related version of classical realism.²¹⁰

As we have already seen, Morgenthau was by no means clear or consistent in what he understood to constitute a rational or scientific approach to politics. Given the availability of a central concept like power Morgenthau felt that it was possible to distinguish a separate sphere of politics. In spite of the "ambiguities of the subject matter" one could assume that "politics is engaged in by rational men who pursue certain rational interests with rational means."²¹¹ Elsewhere Morgenthau drew an analogy

1991) pp.109-110. Kenneth Waltz insists that Morgenthau and other 'traditionalists' affirmed a preeminently behavioral logic. K. Waltz, 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory', in Charles W. Kegley Jr (ed.), *Controversies in International Relations Theory: Realism and the Neoliberal Challenge* (St Martin's Press, New York, 1995) p.71. Raymond Aron, too, doubted whether there was a real debate between traditionalists and behaviouralists. See his 'Theory and Theories in International Relations: A Conceptual Analysis', in Norman D. Palmer (ed.), *A Design for International Relations Research*, p.61. Knorr and Rosenau stressed that the dispute was based fundamentally upon method rather than content. See Klaus Knorr and James Rosenau, 'Tradition and Science in the Study of International Relations', in Klaus Knorr and James Rosenau (eds.), *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton University Press, 1969) p.12. For a contrary view see Murray, *Reconstructing Realism*, pp.46-48; Brian C. Schmidt, *The Political Discourse of Anarchy: A Disciplinary History of International Relations* (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1998) p.31; Marcus Raskin, 'Morgenthau: The Idealism of a Realist', Myers and Thompson (eds.), *Truth and Tragedy*, pp.87-88; Ole Waever, 'The rise and fall of the inter-paradigm debate', in Smith et al, *International Relations Theory*, p.162; Peter Gellman, 'Hans J. Morgenthau and the legacy of political realism', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.14, October 1988, p.252.

²⁰⁹ Robert Gilpin, 'The richness of the tradition of political realism', pp.289-290. As Rob Walker is also aware, it is puzzling that Gilpin doesn't seem to see this intellectual tension as problematic. see Walker, *Inside/Outside*, p.119.

²¹⁰ Robert Jackson, 'Is there a Classical International Theory?', in S.Smith, K.Booth and M.Zalewski (eds.), *International Relations Theory: Positivism and Beyond* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) p.213.

²¹¹ H. Morgenthau, 'The Nature and Limits of a Theory of International Relations', in William T.R. Fox (ed.), *Theoretical Aspects of International Relations* (University of Notre Dame, 1959) pp.17-21.

with economics: "as economics is centered upon the concept of interest defined as wealth, its accumulation, and distribution, so political science is centered upon the concept of interest defined as power, its accumulation, distribution and control."²¹² Some years later, having apparently been taken at his word by many academics who did draw upon economic methodologies, Morgenthau now asserted that politics could not be compared with economics in this way. A theoretical scheme based upon economic theory meant that "nations confront each other not as living historic entities with all their complexities but as rational abstractions, after the model of 'economic man', playing games of military and diplomatic chess according to a rational calculus that exists nowhere but in the theoretician's mind."(!) This rational calculus was made possible in economics by the nature of its central concept - wealth. Power, given its lack of fungibility, could simply not be used in this way.²¹³ It is hard to see this as anything other than flatly contradictory. Though, as we've already seen, the confusion is connected to fundamental epistemological problems it is possible that these were exacerbated by Morgenthau attempting to stretch his Weberian position to meet the scientific criteria for legitimacy which were established in the discipline in the 1950s and 1960s.

Neo-Realism has been described as a 'progressive, scientific, redemption of classical realism' and it is clear that Waltz was one of those who sought to make something further of Morgenthau's original methodological analogy of economics and politics.²¹⁴ Waltz first came to

²¹² Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 1958).

²¹³ Morgenthau, 'International Relations: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches', in Norman D. Palmer (ed.), *A Design for International Relations Research: Scope, Theory, Methods, and Relevance* (American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Philadelphia, 1970) pp.70-71. For a discussion of the problem of power and its fungibility see Barry Buzan, 'The Timeless Wisdom of Realism?', in Smith et.al., *International Relations Theory*, pp.51-55. For a denial that it actually does present a serious problem for realism see Waltz, 'Realist Thought', pp.72-73.

²¹⁴ In a review of Morgenthau's *Dilemmas of Politics* Waltz comments on the passage from Morgenthau quoted on the previous page:

attention with the publication of his *Man, the State, and War* in 1954. In it Waltz explored the problem of the causes of war and identified three 'images' or levels at which the causes of war could be identified; firstly within the individual nature of man (so-called 'first-image pessimism', a position he attached to classical realists like Reinhold Niebuhr and Morgenthau); secondly, within the structure of individual governments (for example, in the fundamental nature of authoritarian/totalitarian regimes); and, thirdly, as a product of the anarchical system (anarchical in the formal sense of having 'no common power', to borrow Hobbes's description). It was already clear that Waltz found the third of these three 'images' to provide the most convincing explanation for the cause of war. Kenneth Thompson reports on a conversation that he had with Waltz some years later (in the early 1960s) in which Waltz expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of theoretical rigour of *Man, The State, and War* and suggested that he intended to devote himself exclusively for several years to reading in the history and philosophy of science.²¹⁵ Some fifteen years later Waltz produced his *magnum opus* with the publication of *Theory of International Politics* which has become one of the most influential and undoubtedly one of the most important books published in International Relations during the past fifty years.

"... what it suggests to this reviewer is the following question: Would it be helpful to say that in economic matters the businessman pursues his interests defined in terms of wealth, and that in order to make "rational" decisions he needs a "rational" outline, or map, of economics? This is precisely what Professor Morgenthau does say of the state in international relations, with only the substitution of the words "political science" for "economics" and "power" for "wealth". Economic theory, however, does not depend upon the assumption that entrepreneurs are rational or that any one of them will calculate correctly, but rather on the perception that in a competitive economy all of them are constrained to try, with bankruptcy, the penalty for failure, as the compelling factor." Waltz, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.53, No.2, June, 1959, p.53. The interesting thing about this passage is that it shows how Waltz was already preparing to shift away from Morgenthau's methodological individualism towards a more holistic position centred around an anarchical international system which shapes the behaviour of its constituent units. Others have been content to follow Morgenthau's methodological suggestion. Gilpin contrasts Waltz's 'sociological' formulation with the 'economic or rational choice theory' of his own *War and Change in World Politics* which starts with the individual state actors and their motives (as in classical microeconomic theory) and only then seeks to account for the emergence and change of international systems'. See Gilpin, 'The richness of the tradition of political realism', p.288.

²¹⁵ Thompson, *Schools of Thought*, p.139.

A small industry has grown around the examination of *Theory of International Politics* and I do not wish to subject it to (yet) another close scrutiny here. I do, however, want to suggest two things; firstly, that in spite of some superficial similarities, at a much deeper level the differences between Morgenthau and Waltz are profound and, secondly, that Waltz's version of neo-realism is in many respects fully in keeping with the progressive nature of the American science of politics. It is true that Waltz's emphasis on war as the product of an anarchic international system is hardly 'progressive' but the astonishing thing about *Theory of International Politics* is that nowhere does one get any sense whatever that international politics can actually be a perilous undertaking, no sense of the occasions during the Cold War when humanity hovered precariously above a precipice. Written in the calm, measured, scientific tone of much of American social science there is a vast and, as we shall see in chapter three, important, rhetorical gulf between Waltz and Morgenthau. And though Waltz has been careful to distance himself from the suggestion that specific foreign policy positions can be drawn from his theoretical stance, he is undoubtedly being somewhat disingenuous. He does, after all, suggest that "the challenge is to bring theory to bear on facts in ways that permit explanation and prediction."²¹⁶ 'Explanation and Prediction', surely, opens up the possibility of prescription and control.²¹⁷ Elsewhere Waltz makes the provocative suggestion that, on the assumption that human beings are fundamentally rational, the spread of nuclear weapons may actually serve to prevent conflict.²¹⁸ This, I would

²¹⁶ Waltz, 'Realist Thought and Neorealist Theory', p.68.

²¹⁷ One prominent 'behaviouralist' displayed an astonishing naivete in this respect:

"My view is that, as our knowledge base expands and is increasingly integrated in the theoretical sense, the better our predictions will be, and therefore, the fewer policy disagreements we will have." J. David Singer, 'The Incomplete Theorist: Insight without Evidence', in Knorr and Rosenau, *Contending Approaches*, p.66.

²¹⁸ See Kenneth Waltz, 'The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better', *Adelphi Paper 171* (International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1981). For criticism of what he calls this "simplistic rational model of deterrence" see Joseph S. Nye, *Nuclear Ethics* (The Free Press, New York, 1986) p.87.

suggest, displays a faith in human reason strong enough to make the most enlightened of *philosophes* blush. It is a faith categorically not shared by Morgenthau who, as we shall see in the next chapter, viewed the possibility of nuclear proliferation with the deepest dread. The point is that even when looking at an American realist like Waltz we can still see threads of the familiar faith in the powers of reason and the efficacy of science.

Similarly, it has often been pointed out that the notion of power was an integrating feature of the Chicago School in local, national, and international politics.²¹⁹ "When we speak of the science of politics", wrote Harold Lasswell, "we mean the science of power."²²⁰ This is true even of Charles Merriam and it could hardly have been otherwise.²²¹ How could any man with an intimate knowledge of the politics of a city like Chicago be unaware of the importance of power? The point, however, is that the understanding of power is very different indeed from that of someone like Morgenthau. Power in this American context seems to lose the diabolical qualities that it possesses in Morgenthau's reading. Shorn of its anguished metaphysics it becomes something altogether more malleable and manageable: a form of energy that can be tamed by the forces of science and reason. In short, power is stripped of its tragic dimension.

This is, surely, connected to the long-standing faith in science and progress that runs through the whole history of political science in the United States. One of the indications of this has been the extraordinary fact that until at least the Second World War the question of what science was and how it was to be constituted was taken to be entirely unproblematic in spite of the heavy emphasis placed upon its importance. Merriam and Lasswell, two of the most important figures in the establishment of a science of politics, do not

²¹⁹ See for example, Olson and Groom, *International Relations*, p.120.

²²⁰ Lasswell quoted in Crick, *American Science*, p.181.

²²¹ Crick suggests that Merriam was the first American to see the 'inner consistency' of the notion of power in politics as the equivalent of 'mass' and 'energy' in physics. *ibid.* p.148.

at any point concern themselves with the philosophy of science.²²² Typically, when William Munro pointed to the revolutionary intellectual developments in physics during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he did not draw from this any epistemological doubts about the value of any given set of scientific truths, but rather took the changes as confirmation of a highly simplistic understanding of scientific progress.²²³ When Morgenthau draws attention to this problem in *Scientific Man* it seems rather trite from a contemporary vantage point but it must have been the first time that many of his readers had been exposed to this sort of epistemological question. Similarly, the notion that the American science of politics has been an open-ended and value-free undertaking has always been a sham given the fundamental faith in the American triptych. As Ricci has pointed out "the discipline was not really asked, directly or otherwise, to follow the dictates of science wherever they might lead... instead, because America was so overwhelmingly devoted to the principles and practices of democratic liberalism, the end for political science was virtually laid down in advance ..."²²⁴

So strong has this faith in the American triptych been that it has resulted in "an American political culture almost innocent of irony and tragedy."²²⁵ This absence has deep historical foundations. Samuel Bercovitch has shown how the Jeremiad introduced by the Puritans quickly adopted a more progressive form in its New England context.²²⁶ In America the dark this-worldly pessimism of Calvin could be set aside in a land free of the religious bigotry and hierarchical feudalism of Europe.²²⁷ The 'Founding Fathers' fears of how commerce and uncontrolled power could corrupt

²²² On this point see Crick, *American Science*, p.214.

²²³ Munro, 'Physics and Politics', p.113.

²²⁴ Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science*, p.70.

²²⁵ Diggins, *Max Weber*, p.XV.

²²⁶ Samuel Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

²²⁷ Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History*, pp.25, 52-53.

republican virtue were swept aside by the sheer exuberance and forward mindedness of Jacksonian democracy. The first major challenge to the doctrine of progress - the Civil War - left nothing like the poisonous legacy the Great War did in Europe, in spite of its ferocity. Southerners, fearful of the replacement of a patriarchal, hierarchical, gentlemanly commerce with an impersonal, industrial capitalism could at least console themselves with the newly acquired understanding that 'uppity' blacks could continue to be emasculated through mechanisms more informal than that of slavery.²²⁸ In a certain sense the Civil War was America's crisis of modernity in that it pitted two distinct civilisations - one modern and one anti-modern - against each other and once that conflict had been resolved in favour of the North there was little else to provide a fundamental challenge to the doctrine of progress.

America was much less affected by the *fin-de-siècle* angst that was so influential in Europe. Progressives sought not to overturn the existing socio-economic system but rather to reform the worst aspects of robber-baron capitalism. Trade unionists fought their bitter industrial battles simply to obtain their fair share of the bountiful surplus of Fordism, and not as the vanguard of proletarian revolution.²²⁹ Few recognised Nietzsche's announcement of the 'Death of God'. It is, surely, no coincidence that a commitment to the doctrine of progress has remained strongest in a country where Judeo-Christian faith and participation in formal religious organisation has continued to be correspondingly strong. Nor did many subscribe to Weber's prophecy of an alienating, suffocating bureaucracy; much less the imminence of Marxian revolution.²³⁰ It has been said of Charles Merriam, and it no doubt has a much wider currency, that he "was not the slightest bit

²²⁸ On this period see Eric Foner's classic *Reconstruction: America's unfinished revolution, 1863-1877* (Harper and Row, New York, 1988).

²²⁹ See John Patrick Diggins, *The rise and fall of the American Left* (WW Norton, New York, 1992).

²³⁰ As has been noted elsewhere, for Woodrow Wilson the bureaucratic machine was a tool to be utilised, not a prison. See Michael Rogin, 'Max Weber and Woodrow Wilson: The Iron Cage in Germany and America', *Polity*, December, 1971, p.572.

ambivalent about the rationalization of the world. To him, the iron cage of industrial society was a modern political community - a perfect union of democracy and bureaucracy."²³¹ Even the Great Depression found an adequate antidote in the pragmatism of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. And Theodore Roosevelt's romantic nationalism was barely a pale imitation of the virulent *volkish* mysticism which infected the German polity. In short, there was no crisis to compare with that in Europe and especially Germany.

In material terms the doctrine of progress was buttressed by an unequivocal commitment to science and technological advance. Intellectually, the American response to European nihilism was resolute and two-pronged in the form of John Dewey's pragmatism allied to Woodrow Wilson's evangelical liberalism.²³² Pragmatism, with its setting aside of metaphysics and its implicit - and often explicit - faith in democracy and science seems a quintessentially American philosophy.²³³

In a certain superficial sense one can see similarities between the pragmatist and the Weberian positions in, for example, the common claim that there is no scientific means with which to choose between the relative value of values. This is how Weber has come to be misappropriated as a positivist in the United States.²³⁴ When seen in their broader contexts the two positions seem much less similar. As I have already suggested, given the background of the German metaphysical crisis, Weber's call for value neutrality appears as a kind of grim intellectual ascetic. Weber challenges us to stare into the abyss without blinking. In the American context pragmatism serves to reinforce the existing social order and acts to reaffirm the essential value of the American triptych.

²³¹ Seidelman, *Disenchanted Realists*, p.115.

²³² On this alliance of Pragmatism and Wilsonianism see Diggins, *Max Weber*, p.278.

²³³ On Pragmatism being used as a weapon in the fight against historicism see Jurgen Herbst, *The German Historical School*, pp.158-159, 206-207. For a good summary of Dewey's impact see Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science* pp.103-106.

²³⁴ On Weber's American reception see Diggins, *Max Weber*, and H.Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change*, pp.30-32.

A similar point can be made of Morgenthau vis-a-vis behavioralism in the United States. In his case it is the comparison with Charles Merriam which proves instructive. Again, in a certain superficial sense, the two could be seen to have had more in common than either would perhaps have recognised. Both believed in the primacy of politics. Both accepted that intellectuals had duties beyond the boundaries of the ivory tower even while they remained fundamentally ambivalent about the form that this public engagement should take. And though Weber had not flowed through to the American consciousness in the 1920s, Progressives like Merriam shared Morgenthau's emphasis upon the importance of leadership.²³⁵ Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the emphasis upon power made it a central unifying principle of the Chicago School. Again, however, it is at a much deeper level that the differences between the two men became apparent. Though he accepted the centrality of power, Merriam also thought that it could be successfully managed through the application of reason. As his biographer has suggested "his utopia was that of rational, scientific political debate."²³⁶ The notion that power and the political may have tragic dimensions scarcely enters into Merriam's consciousness, nor does it enter the broader realm of American social science.

I do not wish to suggest that there is no darker, sceptical, less progressive intellectual tradition in America. John Patrick Diggins point to the existence of "another tradition, one that begins with Calvinism and culminates in the twentieth century in the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr; and this Niebuhrian, Augustinian strain in American thought includes the tragic sensibility of Lincoln and Melville."²³⁷ To this list one could add John C.

²³⁵ On these points see Karl, *Charles E. Merriam*, pp.40, 138, 179.

²³⁶ *ibid.* p.204. For a similar assessment of Merriam see William T.R. Fox, 'Pluralism, The Science of Politics, And the World System', *World Politics*, Vol.27, 1974-75, pp.597-611.

²³⁷ Diggins, *Max Weber*, p.278. It is no accident that Abraham Lincoln was a figure so often on Morgenthau's mind. As we shall see in chapter four, Lincoln is the subject of one of Morgenthau's final works.

Calhoun and those other defenders of the South, fearful of the threatening modernity presented to them by the industrial North. One could also include the gloomy handful of intellectual Europhiles characterised by Henry James and this list is undoubtedly not exclusive. Even so, what Diggins fails to emphasise enough is how marginal and ephemeral this tradition has been in the American context. No intellectual tradition, nor even a seismic political event of the magnitude of the Civil War has provided a fundamental challenge to the doctrine of progress.

This is despite the fact that, though America has been free of the baggage of a feudal past, it has by no means been without its share of 'contradictions.' "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."²³⁸ The most obvious contradiction here was that this grandiose declaration was thought entirely compatible with the enslavement of one section of humanity on the basis of the colour of its skin. Some men were, manifestly, more equal than others! Similarly, the emphasis upon equality has always rested uneasily with the commitment to free-market capitalism. Alexis de Tocqueville pointed to the sameness of American individualism, amongst other paradoxes. Hans Morgenthau is, then, part of a longer tradition of outsiders who have sought to lay bare the paradoxes and contradictions at the heart of the American doctrine of progress. In dismissing the debate between 'traditionalists' and 'behaviouralists' as one of mere method, International Relations scholars, in their typically parochial way, have ignored this broader context.²³⁹ It was precisely his questioning of the doctrine of progress which placed Morgenthau so fundamentally at odds with the American science of politics.

²³⁸ The Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776.

²³⁹ For further examples of this widely held position see K.J. Holsti, *The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory* (University of British Columbia, 1985) p.39; Michael Banks, *Conflict in World Society* (Wheatsheaf Books, Brighton, 1984) p.14.

In Morgenthau's specific case he sought to challenge the notion of American exceptionalism in foreign affairs - the belief that American alone had been able to remain free of the corruption of the power politics of the old world. Much of the chapters three and four concerned with tracing Morgenthau's engagement with this American national mythology.

Chapter Three: Intellectual in the Political Sphere

"Mendacity in a professor is a moral fault which denies the very core of the professor's calling." (Hans Morgenthau)

The Europe-wide persecution of Jews and leftist intellectuals resulted in the emigration to America of a group which George Steiner has described as "...undoubtedly the intellectually most gifted community since fifth-century Athens and Renaissance Florence..."¹ By no means was this an exaggeration. The émigrés brought about an unprecedented enrichment to American cultural and intellectual life. In the case of physics and mathematics their impact was dramatic enough to profoundly shape the course of international politics. The 'Manhattan Project' is inconceivable without the input of the brilliant physicists, chemists, and mathematicians from Eastern and Central Europe.²

Other émigrés helped to find a new home for psychoanalysis at a time when it was foundering in Europe and in danger of disappearing as a subject altogether. In music, a galaxy of foreign-born musicians and conductors helped to create new American orchestras and strengthen existing ones such that they came, in Chicago, in Boston, in New York and elsewhere to match the best of the old-world. If Europe remained the centre for developments in composition, the émigrés did help to enrich existing American musical forms. The movie scores of the famous Viennese *Wunderkind* Erich Korngold helped

¹ George Steiner, 'The Archives of Eden', in *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1996* (Faber and Faber, London, 1997) pp.284-285. It is estimated that from Germany alone some 3000 academics and other intellectuals were driven into exile. About half of the European intellectuals who came to America were German, of which two-thirds was also Jewish. See Hans Kostendiek, 'Political development and Political Science in West Germany', in David Easton, John Gunnell and Luigi Graziano (eds), *The Development of Political Science: A Comparative Survey* (Routledge, London, 1991) p.115; Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change*, p.2.

² It is interesting to ponder the counterfactual of what might have happened had the energies of these men been harnessed by the Nazis.

to raise this genre to a new pinnacle of excellence. Kurt Weill merged German cabaret with the Broadway musical to fascinating effect.

In sociology and in political science, as we have already seen, émigrés like Morgenthau, Kissinger, Strauss and Voeglin made a profound challenge to the prevailing orthodoxy of behavioralism in American political science. Oskar Morgenstern and John von Neumanns' *Theory of Games and Economic Behaviour* signalled (for better or for worse) the path that many American political scientists would follow upon the exhaustion of behavioralism.

What is often forgotten amidst the glitter of these tales of intellectual achievement, however, are those who faded into obscurity in their new surroundings. For many intellectuals the ability to function successfully depended, after all, upon a particular form of cultural and physical environment. Not every intellectual could be a man - or woman - of the world in a thoroughgoing sense.³

America provided its own share of problems for the émigrés. Few of them spoke English, as is a matter of course for the global elite now, and this was especially troublesome for novelists. It was one thing for a scientist to acquire enough English to produce technical papers but quite another for a writer to capture the subtleties of the new language. It comes as no surprise to learn that writers formed the largest group of those intellectuals who subsequently re-emigrated to Europe.⁴ One of the biggest difficulties for many arrivals was the lack of deference and status afforded to intellectuals and the life of the mind in general in the United States. Theodor Adorno discovered that in America "...no reverential silence in the presence of everything intellectual prevailed, as it did in Central and Western Europe far

³ The long list of suicides by those in exile includes Joseph Roth, Stefan Zweig, Walter Benjamin, Klaus Mann and Ernst Toller. See Henry Pachter, 'On Being an Exile: An Old-Timer's Personal and Political Memoir', in Robert Boyers (ed.), *The Legacy of the German Refugee Intellectuals* (Schocken Books, New York, 1969) p.20.

⁴ Fermi, *Illustrious Immigrants*, pp.379-381.

beyond the confines of the so-called educated classes..."⁵ American-style competition in the marketplace proved too much for some of those arriving in a state of physical and emotional fragility and financial vulnerability. Many intellectuals returned to Europe from America from the early 1950s, Thomas Mann among them.⁶

For many of the Germans who stayed, Nazism assumed the form of an ever-present motif in their publications even when, very often, their personal intellectual interests had little to do with politics. One can point here to Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom*, Theodor Adorno's *The Authoritarian Personality*, Franz Neumann's *Behemoth*, Ernst Cassirer's *The Myth of the State*, Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and there are many other examples. This preoccupation with the German past often betrayed a continuing emotional empathy and identification with Germany in spite of their effective expulsion from the nation. Many did return to Germany for good and others, like Hannah Arendt, continued to regard it as 'home' even while remaining in the United States.

The flip-side of the absorption with Nazism was the spectre of the disintegration of the Weimar Republic. This gave many the sense that democracy was an inherently fragile form of government and it meant that they sometimes overreacted to domestic political developments like the rise of McCarthyism, as disturbing as that phenomenon was. A scan through the many articles of Hannah Arendt and Hans Morgenthau finds them replete with titles involving failure, crisis, collapse, tragedy and so on. If Morgenthau shared this element with some of his fellow émigrés he was, in many other respects, very different. Though in his late thirties when he first came to

⁵ Theodor Adorno, 'Scientific Experiences of A European Scholar in America', trans. Donald Fleming, in Fleming and Bailyn (eds.), *The Intellectual Migration*, p.367. Adorno went on to suggest that "the absence of this respect inclined the intellect toward critical self-scrutiny". This may well be the case but, alas, it did nothing to make Adorno's works any less opaque!

⁶ See Fermi, op.cit. Some of these were responding to the improved economic climate in Europe. Others were fleeing McCarthyism and the fear that it marked the emergence of a nascent American fascism.

America, he seems to have acquired an impressive fluency in English with remarkable ease.⁷ That he was also able to find a position at a leading university also facilitated the process of adjustment.

At a deeper level there is little doubt that Morgenthau was largely free of the emotional hankering for a German 'home' that so marked Arendt and many others.⁸ Though he returned to Germany for short visits on a number of occasions there is little doubt that he did come, at least for a time, to feel a part of the American collectivity, as we shall see in chapter four. It is also clear that Nazism did not prey upon his mind in the way that it did with many others. Given that he was a German lecturer in International Politics it would have been astonishing if he had never written anything at all on Nazism or the Jewish catastrophe in Europe (which also claimed many of his family members) but the two articles and single review which I have found hardly amount to very much given the overall size of Morgenthau's output.⁹

⁷ Though he never lost his strong German accent which was, to give the reader who has never heard him some basis for comparison, even more pronounced than Henry Kissinger's.

⁸ It is hardly surprising that two general works on the subject of the intellectual emigre in America include Morgenthau as an example of what one author described as "those who have experienced no problem of adjustment but, on the contrary, are swimming happily in the mainstream of American life and politics." Pachter, 'On Being an Exile', p.43. Also see Fermi, *Illustrious Immigrants*.

⁹ See 'Naziism'(sic), in Joseph S. Roncek (ed.), *From Twentieth Century Political Thought* (Philosophical Library, New York, 1946) pp.132-148; 'The Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture' (Leo Baeck Institute, New York, 1961) pp.5-16; 'The incarnation of demoniac power': review of Robert Payne's 'The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler' in *Business Week*, April 21 1973, p.12. Nor is there anything exceptional in his reading of Nazism, though one does register inconsistencies with his brief remarks on the subject elsewhere. The book chapter on Nazism cited above stresses its fundamental incoherencies and irrationality whereas in *Scientific Man* he points to the instrumental rationality of the Nazis and warns against the claim that fascism was "...a mere temporary regression into irrationality..." Similarly, in the article he attempts to place a certain amount of distance in terms of continuity between Nazism and the German past:

"It is indeed obvious that with respect to many of its tenets, such as the emphasis upon will and emotions as over against reason, the glorification of the state and the disdain for the individual as such, the worship of power pure and simple, the political philosophy of Naziism (sic) builds upon foundations laid by the German tradition. Yet one looks in vain in the pre-Nazi tradition of German political thought for the intellectual closedness, the moral nihilism and the pseudo-religious fervor, which characterize Nazi political thought." (p.138). In a letter, admittedly written a few years earlier, Morgenthau emphasised that Nazism had "...arisen from the depth of the German soul and represents its atavistic, barbaric side whose vitality has been plaintively recognised by the greatest Germans..." Letter to Professor Phillip C. Jessup, August 10 1942, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 31.

This relative detachment was also reflected in Morgenthau's attitude towards the Nuremberg Trials. Anticipating the argument that Hannah Arendt would make in her *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, Morgenthau accepted that "the eighteen men convicted at Nuremberg were guilty of many crimes and they were justly condemned and punished." He also stressed, however, that this amounted to a *punitive* trial which had little plausible foundation in international law:

"The Second World War was a war for survival, undertaken by individual nations in their own national interest, not the punitive war of a morally united humanity for the purpose of making eternal justice prevail". He went on to warn that "to make the condemnation [of those tried at Nuremberg] the occasion for the revival of the institution of punitive war is morally unwarranted and fraught with moral and political danger."¹⁰

As Jaap Nobel is also aware, Nazism appears for Morgenthau as another calamitous chapter in the history of the politics of the twentieth century rather than, as Nobel describes it, "a triumph of evil over good" and one gains little sense of the personal tragedy for Morgenthau as German and Jew.¹¹

All these elements combine to give us a picture of a man who adjusts very well to the new circumstances of his life in the United States. If in this

In his Leo Baeck address his remarks are familiar enough but what stands out is a sense of distance from the subject matter. At no point would a reader (or listener) unaware of Morgenthau's background glean that Morgenthau was himself a Jew or that his family was a part of "the disaster which befell the Jews of Germany..." (p.5). As we shall see in chapter four, however, Morgenthau did come to develop a certain empathy for the state of Israel and his Jewishness seems to have given him some sense of solace in his final years.

The book review is interesting for Morgenthau's description of a rally held in Munich in 1922, at which Hitler spoke:

"I had one of the most profound experiences of my life. I have never heard before or since a man with such passionate eloquence who told his audience exactly what it wanted to hear... Hitler transformed that audience... into a howling mob. I shall never forget the paralysis of will that took hold of me while I was listening to this man, knowing full well in my mind that what he said was malicious nonsense."

It does seem a little odd, given the obvious interest to American audiences, that Morgenthau doesn't repeat this story in his interview with Bernard Johnson or indeed anywhere else as far as I have been able to determine.

¹⁰ See his letter to Reverend John La Farge of the American National Catholic Weekly, November 12, 1946, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 1.

¹¹ Nobel, 'Morgenthau's struggle with power', p.6.

respect he was different from many other German émigrés there is one element, I would suggest, that virtually all German intellectuals, émigré or otherwise, held in common, and that is a certain yearning for unity - physical and metaphysical - for something beyond the economisation of politics that modernity has brought in its wake. This applies equally to Schmitt, Morgenthau, Arendt, Habermas, Tönnies, Marx, Hegel and even Weber.¹² It is, however, obvious that there are important differences in the nature of the political or public spaces which these individuals wished to carve from the maelstrom of modernity. There are significant differences, too, between Arendt and Habermas though both use the adjective 'public' rather than 'political' to describe their conceptions. Morgenthau's understanding of a political sphere is very different again from the Arendt/Habermas notion of a public space/sphere/realm.¹³ In exploring the notion of a 'public' sphere, however, I hope to illuminate Morgenthau's alternative conception.

The Public Sphere

In one of Habermas's earliest works *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* he identifies a bourgeois public sphere which arose in parts of Europe and, especially, England in the eighteenth century.¹⁴ In the Middle Ages the notion of a 'public' had hardly extended beyond the confines of monarch and court but this had begun to change with the expansion of capitalism and the rise of the middle classes. Court society in England was gradually replaced, or at least supplemented, with the salons, the coffee-houses, the taverns and, perhaps most importantly, the newspapers,

¹² Warren Magnusson's assertion that the "...search for political space appears as something especially of the left ..." is simply untrue. See his *The search for political space: globalization, social movements, and the urban political experience* (University of Toronto Press, 1996) p.47.

¹³ In the discussion that follows I will use these three words interchangeably.

¹⁴ Much of the discussion here is based upon Craig Calhoun's introduction to his edited book *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (MIT, 1992) pp.1-50.

pamphlets and other forms of print media which came into being initially as a response to the need of merchants for economic information of wider geographic areas. This economic imperative coincided with the growth of the permanent administration of state bureaucracy and the result was that newsletters began to carry news concerning this tangible public sphere as well.¹⁵ A bourgeois public developed an intimate concern with the doings of this public sphere but did not become an identifiable part of it and formed a 'civil society' which could approach this public realm critically. The most important element for Habermas was that this did not amount merely to the rise of a new interest group, but rather gave rise to a genuine "rational-critical discourse on political matters" which at least opened up the possibility of a general interest not reducible to its private components.¹⁶

Aside from the rise of an impersonal public agency, the other crucial factor underpinning the public sphere was that economic relationships remained a largely private matter. Hence the bourgeois participants in this nascent public sphere, as the paternal heads of families and small-scale commercial enterprises, could meet in the public realm on the basis of relatively equal terms or, perhaps to be more accurate, in a situation in which differences in status had been temporarily suspended. Calhoun describes a situation where:

"...early British businessmen met in coffee houses to discuss matters of trade, including the "news", which was coming into ever-wider circulation. London had three thousand coffee houses by the first decade of the eighteenth century, each with a core of regulars. The conversations of these little circles branched out into affairs of State administration and politics. Journals of opinion were created, which linked the thousands of smaller circles in London and throughout the country. These were often based at particular

¹⁵ The novelty of this public sphere was that it was impersonal and not immediately identifiable with the will of a King or other overlord.

¹⁶ Calhoun, 'Introduction', p.9.

coffee houses and replicated in their contents the style of convivial exchange."¹⁷

'Convivial exchange', then, between relative equals who were linked in the broadest terms by class, gender, and economic interests.

A number of the contributors to the Calhoun volume emphasise that this amounts to a highly idealised portrait of eighteenth century discourse.¹⁸ Aside from this, the conservatism of the notion is manifest excluding, as it does, plebeian elements and women from participation in this public sphere. It should also be obvious to anyone with even the sketchiest knowledge of modern history that Habermas's public sphere, even if accepted on his terms, could only ever have amounted to a brief moment of crystallisation when state/civil society and public/private were coherent dualities. Habermas accepts that, as private economic organisation grew in size and developed a public significance, on the one hand, and the state penetrated civil society and assumed welfare functions on the other, a 'refeudalization' occurred which blurred the clear distinctions necessary for a viable public sphere. Party politics and the manipulation of the mass media came to take precedence over rational debate. The existence of large-scale organisations meant that work was no longer the purely private prerogative of the bourgeois *paterfamilias*. As a consequence many of these individuals withdrew from participation in public discourse to the apolitical privacy of family life and a role of passive consumption.¹⁹

It is at this point that Habermas's appreciation of the Enlightenment clashes with the sort of bleak critique of the mass culture and instrumental

¹⁷ *ibid.* p.12.

¹⁸ With reference to American circumstances, Michael Schudson suggests that "the idea that a public sphere of rational-critical discourse flourished in the eighteenth or early nineteenth century... is an adequate, if not incoherent notion. Its empirical basis, at least in the American case, seems to be remarkably thin." Michael Schudson, 'Was There Ever a Public Sphere? If So, When? Reflections on the American Case, in Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Space*, p.146.

¹⁹ Calhoun, 'Introduction', pp.21-23; Robert C. Holub, *Jürgen Habermas: critic in the Public Sphere* (Routledge, London, 1991) p.6.

rationality of twentieth century society developed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their *Dialektik der Aufklärung* and elsewhere.²⁰ As a consequence Habermas finds himself unable to identify any concrete way in which to reground a public sphere within the context of advanced capitalist societies. Calhoun notes that Habermas's response was to make a 'linguistic turn' in which he sought a universal basis for a public realm in speech rather than in specific institutional forms.²¹ The whole project is representative of a familiar desire amongst German intellectuals to reclaim a (mythical?) lost whole, an Archimedean (Arcadian?) point.

The theme of the public sphere is one that also resonates strongly throughout the work of Hannah Arendt. Arendt is one of the more controversial figures of the intellectual history of the last fifty years or so. Her best known publications are undoubtedly *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) and *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963). The latter work, in particular, stimulated a furious response to her suggestion that the so-called 'evil' attributed to the actions of some prominent Nazis was, in fact, better understood as the banality of bureaucrats proceeding in instrumentally rational ways. Her second and even more inflammatory claim was that the co-operation extended to the Nazis by various elements of the Jewish leadership in Eastern and Central Europe meant that Jews were, to some degree, complicit in their own destruction. Whether one accepts these claims or not *Eichmann in Jerusalem* remains a brilliant work which alone would justify a substantial posthumous reputation.

She has, however, also attracted a large number of detractors, particularly those of an Anglo-American analytical bent like Isaiah Berlin for whom Arendt's works have always been too fuzzy, too opaque for comfort.²²

²⁰ Holub, *Jürgen Habermas*, p.7.

²¹ Calhoun, 'Introduction', pp.29-32.

²² The American philosopher Raziell Adelson complained that "it is never clear what, if anything, Miss Arendt is for or against." Cited in Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (Yale University Press, 1982) p.424. In public discussion at a conference

In truth, there are probably few writers who mix flashes of brilliance with eccentricities as consistently as Arendt. And one of the least plausible elements of Arendt's *oeuvre* was her treatment of the public sphere.

Unlike Habermas, who at least managed to locate his version of the public sphere in the eighteenth century, it is the Greek Polis that Arendt has firmly in mind.²³ In rejecting modern notions of equality, Arendt turned to the ancient Greek notion that equality exists only in a "...specifically political realm, where men met one another as citizens and not as private persons."²⁴ Freedom too, is a condition which can only be enjoyed when man is amongst his peers in the public sphere.²⁵ Arendt's public space does, however, rely upon the same sort of clear dualities: public-private, politics-economics etc. In particular, the public sphere is the realm of freedom while the private sphere is the realm of necessity where man fulfils his animal functions of eating, procreation and so on. The household was "the center of the strictest inequality" which existed in order to support the equality of the political space.²⁶ The surplus generated by the slave-holding household enabled its head to participate in the life of the polis.²⁷

In the modern world, however, the emancipation of labour has enabled the 'animal laborans' to take possession of the public realm or, to be more accurate, to obliterate it altogether by replacing the political with the

devoted to her work, Morgenthau once asked: "What are you? Are you a conservative? Are you a liberal? What is your position within the contemporary possibilities?" Morgenthau quoted in *ibid.* p.451.

²³ The other important difference, as Calhoun is also aware, is that Habermas is enough of a liberal to believe, unlike Arendt, that individuals are formed primarily in the private sphere and that the private sphere itself is a realm that needs to be defended from excessive interference by the state. See Calhoun 'Introduction', p.7. Both are almost entirely absent from Arendt's work where the emphasis is very much upon the private sphere encroaching upon the public space instead of the reverse.

²⁴ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (Pelican Books, London, 1986 [1953]) p.31.

²⁵ *ibid.* See also *The Human Condition* (Doubleday Anchor Books, New York, 1958) pp.45-50.

²⁶ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp.27-31.

²⁷ "The institution of slavery in antiquity, though not in later times, was not a device for cheap labor or an instrument of exploitation for profit but rather the attempt to exclude labor from the conditions of man's life. What men share with all other forms of animal life was not considered to be human." *ibid.* p.74.

social.²⁸ Facile utilitarian philosophies produce an approach to public life which "...takes on the deceptive aspect of a total of private interests as though these interests could create a new quality through sheer addition. All the so-called liberal concepts of politics... have this in common: they simply add up private lives and personal behavior patterns and present the sum as laws of history, or economics, or politics."²⁹ The modern belief that this development represents the advance of democracy and freedom is illusory:

"The government is democratic in that popular welfare and private happiness are its chief goals; but it can be called oligarchic in the sense that public happiness and public freedom have again become the privilege of the few. The defenders of this system, which actually is the system of the welfare state... must deny the very existence of public happiness and private freedom; they must insist that politics is a burden and that its end is itself not political."³⁰

It is hardly surprising that so many of Arendt's critics have found her Republican vision to be hopelessly anachronistic, in addition to itself being based on a highly idealised reconstruction of the Greek polis.³¹ In modern times Arendt is only able to point to fleeting historical constellations which signified, for a moment, the recapturing of a political essence.³² Margaret

²⁸ See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, pp.43,115,211.

²⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1951) p.145.

³⁰ Arendt, *On Revolution* p.269.

³¹ Judith Shklar referred to Arendt's "many ahistorical fantasies" and charged that she lived in a 'fantasy world'. See 'Hannah Arendt as Pariah', Stanley Hoffmann (ed.), in Judith N. Shklar, *Political Thought and Political Thinkers* (University of Chicago Press, 1998) pp.366,373. On her idealised, even romanticised view of Greek political life see John G. Gunnell, *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation* (Winthrop Publishers, Cambridge, Mass., 1979); Seyla Benhabib, 'Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas', in Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, p.75. Benhabib is even more disturbed by the fact that Arendt's conception necessarily excludes large sections of human societies.

³² These included the American Revolution and, in the twentieth century, the Russian and Hungarian Revolutions. In broader terms the 'republican thesis' has relatively few modern adherents. Charles Taylor is probably its best known advocate. For an eloquent (but unconvincing) attempt to rebut the suggestion that "to hanker after the unity of earlier republics is to indulge in bootless nostalgia" see his 'Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate', in Nancy L. Rosenblum (ed.), *Liberalism and the Moral Life* (Harvard University Press, 1991) pp.159-176.

Canovan, one of Arendt's most tenacious defenders, suggests that Arendt anticipated a contemporary revival of interest in civic humanism but it is still difficult to see Arendt's treatment of the public sphere as anything but a hopelessly romantic and anachronistic endeavour.³³ Arendt singularly fails to engage with the problems of modernity in a way similar to that of many of the German intellectuals we have encountered so far.

Morgenthau was an admirer of Arendt in both a personal and an intellectual capacity.³⁴ He entirely accepted Arendt's assertion that totalitarianism was an essentially new form of government.³⁵ And at the heart of the storm raging over *Eichmann in Jerusalem* Morgenthau remained firm in her support. In a letter to the *New York Times* he made a strident defence of Arendt against the attacks of Barbara Tuchman and others. Eichmann, Morgenthau accepts, "... was a prototype of the efficient German

³³ Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: a reinterpretation of her political thought* (Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp.2, 236-238.

³⁴ Arendt's biographer observes that Arendt and Morgenthau holidayed together on a number of occasions and that they often went out to dinner in New York, especially in the years following the death of Arendt's husband Heinrich Blücher. Arendt apparently rejected a marriage proposal from Morgenthau though they continued their social relationship. According to Young-Bruehl "Arendt always praised him with the phrase she reserved for men of action - *masculini generis* - but she felt that he was without the kind of "real understanding of people" she had loved in Blücher. See Young-Bruehl, 'Hannah Arendt', pp.453-454. In the *Hannah Arendt Papers* there is what can only be described as a love letter from Morgenthau to Arendt of extraordinary intensity:

"Dear Hannah: Please don't mention your age to me again. It detracts from you, from me, and from our relations. I love you at your age. I would love you if you were twenty. I would love you if you were ninety. Each time in a way appropriate to your age. This is a sacred thing which we ought not to belittle or, rather, do it an injustice by confusing it with our age." *Hannah Arendt Papers*, Vol.12, Adams Library, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

It's unclear whether or not this suggests that there was, indeed, something more to their relationship than friendship. Arendt's apparent reference to her age, alluded to by Morgenthau, may have amounted to a tactful form of rejection. The other striking element to be drawn from the Morgenthau-Arendt correspondence is that, in intellectual terms, Morgenthau clearly felt a slight but nagging sense of inferiority vis-a-vis Arendt. In a letter he complains that he is "too busy with Vietnam to do what I really want to do. But then, one has to do one's duty, especially when it's almost literally a question of life and death. I wrote an article on Stevenson which is probably somewhat better than the stuff I must write nowadays on foreign policy." Letter to Hannah Arendt, 25th July, 1965, *Hannah Arendt Papers*, Vol.12. Elsewhere he objected to having "...been typed as an "international relations man" and "power politician", and my activities in this field have obscured my real interests which are really in the field of political philosophy". Letter to Hans Simons, President of the New School for Social Research, August 3, 1955, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 18.

³⁵ See his 'Hannah Arendt on Totalitarianism and Democracy', *Social Research*, Vol.44, No.1, 1977, p.127.

bureaucrat, who happened to apply his administrative talents to the extermination of the Jews. As compared with the monstrosity of his deeds, his person indeed recedes into "banality". Yet it is uncomfortable to have to admit that so ordinary a person was capable of such extraordinary evil. It is, nevertheless, true."³⁶

Even Morgenthau, however, found it necessary to reject her notion of the public space. For, as he warns, "the public space populated by free men is not going to remain populated by free men... [O]ut of the open space of a free society there arise new social forces which, by design or historic contingencies, recreate inequality and close the open space in favor of those who have the power to close it."³⁷ Thus there is a romantic element in Hannah Arendt's conception of freedom and of the mechanism by which it is to be accomplished." Arendt has nothing to tell us on "...how the open space is to be created, how it is to be preserved, how the natural inequality of man can be reconciled with the postulate of equality within the open space..." In one of his most strikingly modernistic moods he concluded that "it may be argued, and I would be willing to argue, that the dilemmas which we are facing are no longer susceptible to the traditional concepts and remedies to which we have been accustomed in our thinking and in our actions."³⁸

Morgenthau in the Political Sphere

³⁶ See the Letters to the Editor, *New York Times*, July 17, 1966, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 43. Morgenthau also saw fit to remind his readers that "there are ordinary people in this country who are convinced that Negroes are sub-human and therefore deserve to be treated like sub-humans." Ironically, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* is arguably Arendt's most impressive work precisely because here she *does* engage with a specific problem of modernity: in this case how can one attribute moral responsibility to individuals who are bound to vast, instrumentally rational, bureaucratic machines? See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Penguin Books, 1994 [2nd edition 1965]).

³⁷ Habermas has been similarly criticised for an inattention to the importance of agency and political struggle.

³⁸ Morgenthau, 'Hannah Arendt', pp.129-131. The irony is that in accusing Arendt of subscribing to a form of romantic nostalgia Morgenthau was making the same charge levelled against him by some of his critics.

It should be clear enough from the discussion so far that Morgenthau's political sphere is different in important ways from the public sphere of Habermas and Arendt. Informed by the sociology of knowledge Morgenthau would no doubt have challenged the notion presented by Habermas in *The Structural Transformation of The Public Sphere* on the same ground that he questioned the liberalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, namely that the middle classes were labouring under a kind of false consciousness which served to conflate their victory over the aristocracy with the triumph of universal values.³⁹ Morgenthau is unlikely to have accepted Habermas's position that the bourgeois discourse of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries represented something of potentially enduring value rather than a temporary constellation of the balance of interests. In general the difference with Habermas and Arendt is straightforward enough: Morgenthau simply cannot conceive of a public realm in which clashes of will and the struggle for power do not predominate. To be sure, certain constitutional arrangements like those in the United States do a better job than others in keeping conflict within manageable limits but they are certainly not able to eliminate it entirely.⁴⁰ The ubiquity of the struggle for power also means that the private/public duality favoured by both Arendt and Habermas is implausible.

And yet, as I have already suggested, Morgenthau's political sphere does assume something more than the economisation of politics and its domination by interest, even if in a far more attenuated form than that in Habermas and Arendt. Effective diplomacy requires that, within states, there is some space for the rational contemplation of state interests free from the

³⁹ Hannah Arendt once wrote a critical review of Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* in which she defended the autonomy of philosophy against the sociology of knowledge. She also asked the fundamental question of how the 'free floating' intellectuals themselves could possibly be freed of the ties of interest, a problem that Morgenthau never really addressed adequately. See Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, pp.83-85.

⁴⁰ In broad terms he would never have been able to accept Arendt's claim that "violence is a marginal phenomenon in the political realm." Arendt, *On Revolution*, p.19.

clamour of the market and sectional interest groups. Outside the state diplomacy requires at least some kind of communication and understanding in order for competing interests to be successfully reconciled without recourse to war. This is, to be sure, nothing remotely approaching a Habermasian 'ideal-speech' situation but it does require at least a rudimentary form of mutual empathy which is threatened by nationalism. As we shall see, it is also the case that in his activities in the political sphere Morgenthau *behaves* as if there is, indeed, a critical public to appeal to. If the political sphere consisted of nothing more than the clash of interests it would seem rather pointless for a lone intellectual to participate in it. This could merely reflect a kind of grim obligation to perform one's duty, a Weberian ascetic of responsibility, but if this was the case it wouldn't account for Morgenthau's evident dismay at the failure to change the American course of action in Vietnam. In any case, in his evident desire to shield a political space from the threat of modernity he confirmed the link with so many of his fellow German intellectuals. How then, did Morgenthau view his role as an intellectual in this predominantly adversarial political space and what were the specific problems presented under the conditions of modernity in the American context?

The question of the relationship between 'truth and power' was never far from Morgenthau's thoughts and he wrote a number of papers and gave several conference papers on the subject. We will need to return to this central theme but for the moment I wish to give some thought to the wider dimensions of the role of the intellectual. How, for example, should the university-based intellectual be disposed to the other pressing commitments of teaching and research? Beyond official institutions what should the relationship be with the broader public, with civil society in general? How can a reasonable balance be struck amongst these multifarious obligations?

There is, of course, no easy answer but we do need to explore how Morgenthau wrestled with the problem.

In terms of teaching Morgenthau wrote nothing on pedagogical theory or practice and there is very little to be found in the way of personal correspondence or reflection on the area in the *Morgenthau Papers*. The image that does emerge from the snippets available, however, is that of a man who took his teaching commitments very seriously and whose disposition was very far removed from the notion that higher education was merely a form of utilitarian exercise in the training of students to become suitable bureaucrats, accountants and lawyers. Reading through the summary of Morgenthau's lecture notes made by his students and retained in his papers, one gains a clear sense of the importance he placed upon sharpening his students' critical faculties, encouraging them at all times to confront commonplace notions afresh.

Beyond the classroom it is clear that, following Weber, Morgenthau considered it of the utmost importance for the academic to conduct his activities in the public realm with the utmost integrity. Indeed, he made clear that the onus placed on the academic was, in this respect, actually greater than that in other walks of life:

"Mendacity in a professor is a moral fault which denies the very core of the professor's calling. A mendacious professor is not like a politician who subordinates the public good to private gain, nor like a business man who cheats. Rather, he is like a physician who, pledged to heal, maims and kills. He is not so much the corrupter of the code by which he is supposed to live as its destroyer."⁴¹

This passage is taken from an article Morgenthau wrote on a scandal that arose in the late 1950s and was recently made the subject of a Hollywood film. An academic from Columbia, Charles Van Doren, had been dazzling the

⁴¹ 'Reaction to the Van Doren Reaction', *New York Times*, November 22, 1959.

nation with displays of his acumen in a popular television quiz programme until it emerged that the whole event had been stage-managed and that Van Doren had, for financial gain, been complicit in an act of deception further compounded by his false denials under oath. What troubled Morgenthau even more than the act itself was some of the wider response to it. Of the Congressional Committee appointed to investigate the incident five of its members "addressed Van Doren in laudatory terms" and two expressed the hope that he would not be forced to relinquish his positions at Columbia and at the National Broadcasting Company. Perhaps even more disturbing for Morgenthau was the fact that, when Columbia did indeed dismiss Van Doren, a student petition demanding his rehiring contained some 650 signatories. "Who", Morgenthau wondered, "blinded them to the moral standards by which they - at least as students - are supposed to live?"⁴² In a further article written as a public response to private correspondence from students Morgenthau re-affirmed that the academic had a particular commitment to substantive truth which required standards higher than those prevailing elsewhere.⁴³

Aside from responsibilities he also sought to defend the attendant rights of the intellectual as he understood them, one of which was the entitlement to reject excessive editorial interference. As we have already seen, in the early part of his academic career in the United States, at least until the manifest success of *Politics Among Nations*, he faced a constant battle with editors who called for the wholesale revision and re-writing of his work. Later, in 1965, a public spat arose between Morgenthau and Norman Podhoretz, the then editor of *Commentary*, over a piece of editorial intervention so heavy-handed that Morgenthau claimed it to have resulted in

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ See his 'Epistle to the Columbians on the Meaning of Morality', *New Republic*, December 22, 1959. Both articles were reprinted as appendices to his *The Purpose of American Politics* (Vintage Books, New York, 1960) pp.342-359.

his article being "drastically changed in content and style."⁴⁴ The ever-supportive Louis Halle took up the theme in *The Times Literary Supplement*, as did Morgenthau in a letter in which he complained about the editorial treatment of his recently published *Vietnam and the United States* and stressed that "the relationship between thought and language is organic and not accidental." Hence, "... whoever attacks my language attacks me in the center of my being. He cripples my communication with my public."⁴⁵ All of this serves to affirm the Weberesque image of a man not given to the sort of easy accommodations and compromises that many others accepted with alacrity.

As for Morgenthau's 'public', this was another of the responsibilities which he accepted as an integral part of the intellectual's lot. As we shall see in the epilogue, much of the recent (limited) debate in British International Relations over the appropriate role of the intellectual has been too narrowly focused on the relationship, important as it is, between academy and government. Morgenthau was sensitive to the existence of a much wider public and he made strenuous efforts to ensure that his ideas were propagated in as wide a variety of fora as possible: newspapers, magazines, academic journals, television and radio broadcasts, lectures at military colleges and schools, addresses to various clubs and societies and so on. If anything, there were times when he was too ambitious in his efforts to cultivate as wide a public appreciation as possible. He went as far as to submit one article to *Playboy Magazine* whose associate editor, perhaps not surprisingly, replied that "our judgement was that the article was too scholarly for our audience."⁴⁶ His public profile also ensured an increasing

⁴⁴ See 'The Writer's Duty and His Predicament', *The Hudson Review*, Vol. XVIII, No.2, Summer 1965, pp.270-277. Morgenthau also used the occasion to condemn other widely practised literary devices like the use of 'ghost' writers. The article includes a bad-tempered reply from Podhoretz who rejected Morgenthau's charges and, in passing, virtually accused him of being a semi-literate!

⁴⁵ Letter to the Editor, *Times Literary Supplement*, October 5, 1965. For similar sentiments see Louis Halle's Letter to the Editor, *Times Literary Supplement*, September 23, 1965.

⁴⁶ Letter from James Goode, Associate Editor, *Playboy Magazine*, October 27, 1966, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 45.

amount of correspondence with the general public and it is a striking general theme from the Morgenthau papers that he was often much more forthcoming about matters intellectual and political in these letters than in communication with his peers.

Given the strength and breadth of this commitment to engaging with the public, together with his other responsibilities, it was perhaps inevitable that he had less time for sustained research and publication than he might otherwise have wished. Though Morgenthau's first three books *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics*, *Politics Among Nations*, and *In Defense of the National Interest* all consist at least in part of re-workings of previously published articles they nevertheless retain a thematic coherency and consistency which justifies their independent existence. This is much less clear with all of Morgenthau's subsequent works which are, with the partial exception of *The Purpose of American Politics*, collections of essays which have been cobbled together and presented as a cohesive whole. This no doubt reflected the fact that, as Morgenthau's public engagement increased during the 1950s and 1960s, he came to concentrate almost exclusively on forms of communication - articles, op-ed pieces, letters - which were most suitable for this audience. It is also the case that Morgenthau was not above recycling what was essentially the same piece of work in a number of different publications and settings. One might observe this practice cynically but I would suggest that it actually represented a genuine effort on Morgenthau's part to reach as wide an audience as possible. He was, after all, a tenured professor for all of this period and not subject to today's bureaucratic imperative of publication by number. As we shall see, however, it is instructive that as tensions began to rise over the course of the Vietnam War in the 1960s, a number of his opponents within academe began to question his publication record and the level of his professional as opposed to public commitment.

This public commitment never extended to elected office. Unlike Weber and many others he never even considered the possibility.⁴⁷ Given his strong sense of independence and general reluctance to suffer fools gladly this was undoubtedly a wise decision. His position with respect to non-elected forms of office was, however, rather more complicated.

At first glance there appears to have been a wide range of involvement with various organs of government and non-governmental organisations. In 1949, at George Kennan's behest, he was employed as a consultant to the State Department through the Policy Planning Board and in 1951 he was sent to Vienna and commissioned to write a report on the changeover from military to civilian rule. He was a member of the Council on Foreign Relations from the mid-1950s until 1974, at which point he renewed his former relationship with the policy planning staff of the State Department. The Defense Department employed him as a consultant from 1963 to 1966 and he also received various commissions from the Disarmament Agency and the Space Agency. He lectured at the staff colleges of the armed forces and testified before Congressional Committees on a number of occasions. In the mid-1950s he set aside his usual non-partisanship to join the Committee on Foreign Affairs to advise the Democratic National Committee.

When examined more closely however, the list appears much less impressive. With most of these appointments Morgenthau's involvement was no more than peripheral and sometimes of short duration. And, as we shall see in chapter four, his opposition to the Vietnam War brought an abrupt end to at least one official role and placed his position on the Counsel on Foreign Relations under extreme pressure. Whatever the extent of Morgenthau's interest in official positions it is clear that he was reluctant to promote himself

⁴⁷ In a letter written toward the end of his life he stated quite plainly that he was "... temperamentally unsuited for this kind of activity." Letter to Dr. Christian Harke, August 17, 1977, Morgenthau Papers, Box 25. For an account of George Kennan's brief candidacy as a Democrat for the House of Representatives see his *Memoirs 1950-1963* (Hutchinson: London, 1973).

in the assertive manner necessary in American political life, nor was he prepared for the inevitable setbacks which follow from such a competitive, and often partisan, process. In his interview with Bernard Johnson he recalls that he approached the government in 1954 with a view to making use of his Spanish contacts and expertise only to find the rejection so humiliating "that I swore I would never again offer my services to the government."⁴⁸ A letter to Dean Acheson in 1963 bemoans the dearth of men in Washington "... who are capable of thinking in political terms" and Morgenthau records his "ambivalent longing at trying my hand at doing better what is being done so badly."⁴⁹ If this represented an effort on Morgenthau's part to attract the attention of a Democrat grandee it was, I would suggest, altogether much too coy to be successful in the American (or indeed almost any other) context.

In broader terms the relationship between intellectuals and government was a subject which Morgenthau frequently explored in his writing and public addresses, especially so as his opposition to the Vietnam War in the 1960s heightened his public profile and attracted official attention. In an article published toward the end of 1966, Morgenthau provided what was probably the clearest summary of his view of the relationship between intellect and power. Following a initial discussion of the particularly troubled dealings of the Johnson Administration with the intellectual community Morgenthau outlined what amounted to a kind of dialectical relationship between the intellectual and the politician:

"The intellectual lives in a world which is both separate from, and potentially intertwined with, that of the politician. The two worlds are separate because they are oriented toward different ultimate values: the intellectual seeks truth; the politician, power.⁵⁰ ...In his search for the truth, the ideal type of

⁴⁸ Johnson, 'Interview', pp.385-386.

⁴⁹ Letter to Dean Acheson, March 30, 1963, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 2.

⁵⁰ He emphasised in passing that he did not wish to imply the superiority of the intellectual over the politician.

intellectual is oblivious to power; in his pursuit of power, the politician at best will use truth as a means to his ends. Yet the two worlds are also potentially intertwined; for truth has a message that is relevant to power, and the very existence of power has a bearing upon both the expression and recognition of truth. (NP) The two worlds are not only separate from, and potentially intertwined with each other, they are also hostile to each other. Truth threatens power, and power threatens truth. Power, in order to be effective, must appear as something other than what it actually is. Deception - deception of others and of self - is inseparable from the exercise of power... (NP) Conversely, truth, by unmasking the pretensions of power, at the very least disturbs the powers that be; for it puts power on the intellectual and moral defensive... and truth may even challenge the status quo of power at the level of practical politics if it is supported by sufficiently powerful interests. Once these interests have won the struggle for power, yesterday's truth becomes today's ideology, justifying, rationalizing, and covering up for the new powers-that-be. Then a new cycle begins, and truth again challenges power."⁵¹

To what he described as "this existential estrangement and potential interconnectedness between truth and power" Morgenthau suggested that the intellectual could "respond in four different ways: by retreat into the ivory tower, by prophetic confrontation, by expert advice, by surrender."⁵²

The first option - 'retreat' - amounts to a form of escapism which Morgenthau, like Weber, rejects. The intellectual can also enter the political space as an expert adviser. In this instance he accepts the status quo and is

⁵¹ 'Truth and Power: The Intellectuals and the Johnson Administration', *New Republic*, November 26, 1966, pp.8-9. As I've already indicated this Mannheimian approach to the problem of ideology and interest leaves a host of questions unanswered. What is the process which enables intellectuals to remain detached from the rise and fall of these great blocs of interests? Why should the intellectual be concerned with the promulgation of temporal truths which merely result in changes to the balance of interests? If deception is an integral part of any exercise of power what is to be gained from its exposure?

⁵² *ibid.* p.9. The fourth option - 'surrender' - appears to be synonymous with retreat.

concerned with giving certain instrumental advice as to how particular means can be best utilised in the service of given ends. At this point the ultimate standard for the intellectual is still power but the danger is that from this point it is only a "small step" towards becoming "an ideologue, that is, a political agent, subject to the criteria of power... [The intellectual] invests popular passions with the dignity of reason and power with the appearance of truth. He substitutes what politicians do in terms not only of necessity, as did Machiavelli, but also of truth and virtue. Here we are in the presence of what Julian Benda forty years ago called "*La Trahison des Clercs*" (The Betrayal of the Intellectuals). Their betrayal does not just consist in the exchange of one calling for another, which can be respectable and even worthwhile. It consists in the exploitation of one calling on behalf of another, in the false pretense of politicians dedicated to the pursuit of power, who make it appear as though they were still intellectuals dedicated to the pursuit of truth."⁵³

The alternative to the intellectual-as-expert is the second option of 'prophetic confrontation' where the intellectual keeps a formal distance from the political sphere while yet trying "to make the knowledge and insight peculiar to him count for the purposes and processes of politics. He is concerned with, but personally detached from, politics. He looks at the political sphere from without, judging it by, and admonishing it in the name of, the standards of truth accessible to him. He speaks, in the biblical phrase, truth to power."⁵⁴ Though it is the case that "only rare individuals have achieved the Socratic distinction of unpopularity, social ostracism, and criminal penalties which are the reward of constant dedication to the relevant truth in matters political" it is, nonetheless, the image of intellectual as pariah that Morgenthau has in mind when he considers the appropriate role of

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

academics.⁵⁵ In broader terms a political science "which is true to its moral commitment" should be a popular undertaking that must, above all, avoid being "treated with indifference as an innocuous pastime ..." ⁵⁶

It is important to keep in mind how strongly this notion of an intellectual's proper role is shaped by Morgenthau's experiences in Germany in the 1930s. At a conference in 1966 where he faced many of his critics he recalled how influential these were:

" I saw in Germany, before 1933, a great number of academics who were in their majority extremely able, intelligent, and honorable men, concentrating upon their own irrelevant but intellectually respectable speciality and turning their backs upon the problems of today. I remember very vividly in 1935 when I came back to Germany for a few days and met, at the University of Munich, with a number of outstanding members of the faculty, who were all opposed to the Nazis, and with a number of church leaders. I listened to their discussions, and I was quite amazed at the parochialism of these intelligent and morally committed people. Each opposed the Nazi regime, not on general grounds but on the ground of particular infringements of their particular domain. Thus, the protestant leaders said they were against the Nazis because they infringed upon the freedom of the churches. The academics opposed the Nazis because they infringed upon academic freedom. After the meeting was over, I mentioned to a world-famous scholar the experience I had that same morning (I am still moved thinking about it) when the body of a close friend of mine had been delivered to his mother from the concentration camp of Dachau. This great scholar, who was also a great man, was obviously annoyed by what I was saying and cut me short with the remark: "I'm not dealing with politics; I'm a scholar." This is, perhaps, one of the experiences which have led me to believe that it is the moral obligation of a political

⁵⁵ Morgenthau, 'Nature and Limits', pp.22-23.

⁵⁶ 'Reflections on the State of Political Science', *The Review of Politics*, Vol. II, No.4, October 1955, p.446; 'The Purpose of Political Science', p.73.

science worthy of the name to be involved with, and to make an intellectual contribution to, the political problems of the day, and that, by doing this, it is bound to expose itself to the risks and liabilities of political controversy."⁵⁷

As I suggested earlier this is by no means an uncontested understanding of what should constitute the proper role of the intellectual.⁵⁸ The 'Betrayal of the Intellectuals' as understood by Benda, after all, did not occur because intellectuals had not exercised their critical faculties in opposition to the political status quo, but rather because intellectuals had muddied their hands in the political sphere at all. It is also possible to point to intellectuals in America who drew very different messages from the German experiences of the 1930s. Edward Shils also invoked Weber and Mannheim as intellectual influences but rather than the collaboration with or lack of resistance to the Nazis on the part of intellectuals it was their failure to support the Weimar Republic that loomed uppermost in his mind. In the view of Shils those intellectuals fortunate enough to be members of relatively open societies, specifically the United States, had a duty to support such political structures with constructive criticism instead of taking an oppositional role.⁵⁹ This rather different reading of the same set of historical events accounts for Shils' rather more conservative view of his own role in American intellectual life and for his reluctance, for example, to involve himself with the anti-Vietnam War movement. I will return to examine the cases of other intellectuals, but for the moment we need to consider Morgenthau's notion of the intellectual as critic in the political sphere both within the general context of modernity and in the specific case of the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.

⁵⁷ 'Conference Discussion on Objectives', in Charlesworth (ed.), *A Design for Political Science*, p.135.

⁵⁸ Also refer to the appendix.

⁵⁹ Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers*, p.I. In Britain William Wallace has adopted a similar position. See 'Truth and Power, monks and technocrats: theory and practice in international relations', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.22, 1996, pp.308-309.

Morgenthau and Modernity

Nick Rengger has drawn attention to two different senses of how modernity is understood, respectively modernity as 'mood' and modernity as 'socio-cultural form'. He draws upon Richard Bernstein to describe the former as a mood which is "amorphous, protean and shifting but which nevertheless asserts a powerful influence on the ways in which we think, act and experience." The latter is more straightforward in its emphasis upon the institutional, social, and economic nature of modernity, in other words the material foundations of what it means to be modern. The difference, as Rengger suggests, is that in the former instance modernity is fundamentally a philosophical question, in the latter case it is sociological.⁶⁰ The distinction is, of course, largely a heuristic one as in most instances the two elements will be intertwined.⁶¹

One can, nevertheless, point to the way in which authors place different weightings upon the two elements. In Max Weber's work, for example, modernity is presented more as a sociological than a philosophical problem. In Hans Morgenthau's writing there appears to have been something of a shift over time beginning in the mid 1940s and the publication of *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics*. Here "the political and military catastrophes of the thirties and early forties" are "but the outward manifestations of an intellectual, moral, and political disease which has its roots in the basic philosophic assumptions of the age."⁶² It is important to keep in mind that this understanding of modernity as mood is supplemented at all times by an awareness of the important changes in the material structure of life since the

⁶⁰ Rengger, 'Political Theory, Modernity and Postmodernity', pp.41-42.

⁶¹ This is not invariably the case though. In Eric Voeglin's *The New Science of Politics* modernity appears as a purely philosophical question (University of Chicago Press, 1952).

⁶² Morgenthau, *Scientific Man*, p.6.

eighteenth century, the "most profound... in recorded history" as Morgenthau is rightly aware. Even so, my general sense of the evolution of Morgenthau's thought is that the relative weighting he assigns to the sociological understanding of modernity becomes increasingly pronounced over the course of the 1950s and 1960s. The most important factor in this was undoubtedly the unfolding nuclear arms race: an event Morgenthau understood, again correctly, as having no substantial historical or philosophical antecedents. However, it is likely that other factors were involved too. As Morgenthau's public profile and attendant responsibilities increased over this period he was brought more directly into contact with the ubiquitous institutions of modern life: government agencies, foundations, large corporations, the mass media and so on. All of this served to heighten his Weberian sense of the way in which these massive organisations came to define themselves in instrumentally rational ways at the expense of broader understandings and also of the profoundly material and sociological nature of these changes.

There is no doubt, though, that of all the material developments that combined to emphasise the difference of modern life it was the advent of nuclear weapons that disturbed him most. 'Disturbed' is perhaps something of an understatement; he was, in fact, shaken to the core. For the remainder of his life following the announcement of the successful test of a Soviet atomic weapon, Morgenthau lived in the shadow of the belief that some kind of cataclysmic nuclear exchange was likely to take place eventually, possibly resulting in the extinction of humanity. Though he was a fervent supporter of nuclear arms reduction talks (though not of the prospects for conventional arms reduction) and lived long enough to see at least the partial implementation of the of the SALT agreements, he probably never suspended

his scepticism that nuclear weapons could be held by states indefinitely without some sort of disastrous exchange.⁶³

So distressed was Morgenthau by the news of the initial Soviet detonation that his initial written response bordered on the hysterical. In an article written in 1950 he asserted that the successful Soviet test constituted a decisive change in the world balance-of-power, nothing less than "the shattering of the foundations upon which American foreign policy has been built."⁶⁴ Somewhat prematurely, as it turned out, he announced that "the period of the Cold War itself has come to an end ...From now on it will be either peace or war."⁶⁵ In addition to calling for an increased defence budget he rather astonishingly asks whether the United States can continue to do without "a general mobilization plan" the absence of which leaves "Alaska open to invasion."⁶⁶ In this clearly agitated state of mind his usually judicious analysis of the nature of the Soviet threat seemed to disappear entirely.

His distress can, perhaps, be better understood when one is aware of his wider understanding of the impact of nuclear weapons. His fundamental position was that the development of nuclear weapons had given rise to an historically unprecedented situation:

"The availability of nuclear weapons has caused the first real revolution in the structure of international relations. From the beginning of history to the end of World War II, that is to say, to the beginning of the nuclear age, there has always existed a rational relationship between violence as a means and the ends of foreign policy. ... This rational relationship has been radically altered by the introduction of nuclear weapons into the arsenal of foreign policy."⁶⁷

⁶³ For a discussion of the fundamental differences, as he perceived them, between nuclear and conventional arms control see 'Some Political Aspects of Disarmament', in C.Schiefl (ed.), *The Dynamics of the Arms Race* (London, 1975).

⁶⁴ 'The Conquest of the United States by Germany', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. VI, No.1, January 1950, p.22.

⁶⁵ *ibid.* p.25.

⁶⁶ *ibid.* p.26.

⁶⁷ 'The American Political Legacy', in William H. Nelson (ed.), *Theory and Practice in American Politics*, 1963, pp.145-146.

In essence Morgenthau's suggestion was that the Clausewitzian nexus between means and ends had been shattered, for what possible rational political ends could be morally justified or even physically achieved through the means of nuclear weapons? He did not, however, conclude from this, as Kenneth Waltz and some others have, that the inherent irrationality of nuclear weapons meant that they were never likely to be used. He ultimately did not have enough faith in the enduring power of human reason to be able to accept that suggestion with any degree of equanimity. And beyond reason he was only too alive to the contingent dangers of miscalculation, accidents, and the prospect of spiralling arms races. He was especially fearful of the destabilising consequences of nuclear proliferation:

"Should American foreign policy not now anticipate a situation which will most likely be upon us in a few years' time, when more than three governments will have the ability to make atomic weapons. Are we prepared to face the international anarchy of ten or so more or less responsible nations having the ability to make atomic weapons? In comparison with that anarchy the present situation will look like a kind of golden atomic age."⁶⁸

He felt, for example, that France's acquisition of nuclear weapons increased the risk of both a localised and a general nuclear war.⁶⁹ It was the development of nuclear weapons, more than any other factor, which convinced Morgenthau that the nation-state was now obsolete as a form of political organisation and that new, supra-national principles were required if humanity was to stave off disaster.

⁶⁸ Unpublished letter to Gilbert Harrison, Editor, *New Republic*, July 2 1956, Morgenthau Papers, Box 43. See also 'From Great Powers to Superpowers', in Brian Porter (ed.), *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics 1919-1969* (Oxford University Press, 1972) p.135. Joseph Nye supports the suggestion that the risk of nuclear weapons use among new proliferators is considerably higher. See his *Nuclear Ethics*, pp.87-88, (The Free Press, New York, 1996).

⁶⁹ 'The Four Paradoxes of Nuclear Strategy', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LVIII, No.1, 1964, p.34.

In terms of his writings on nuclear weapons Morgenthau spent some thirty years criticising the efforts of the 'managers' of nuclear strategy to restore a Clausewitzian rationale to the theory of nuclear war, whether in the form of 'counterforce', so-called 'tactical' nuclear weapons, or any of the other oddities emerging from the increasing fantastic world of American strategic planning. In one of his last publications, written in 1979, Morgenthau re-affirmed that for over thirty years the American strategic community had tried - and failed - in the attempt to make it appear that nuclear weapons could indeed be treated as merely another form of conventional weaponry.⁷⁰

Specifically, Morgenthau rejected both 'tactical' nuclear war and the possibility of a graduated form of deterrence on the grounds that the general levels of risk and uncertainty connected with such forms of conflict meant that participants were unlikely to be able to maintain the necessary level of rational control. Decisions would not be made, Morgenthau emphasised, "... in the detached and rational manner in which chess players make their choices."⁷¹ In practice, maintaining a distinction between tactical and strategic objectives would prove impossible.⁷² Morgenthau used similar arguments against so-called 'counterforce' strategy whose proponents suggested that the United States should, in the first instance, target Soviet military forces rather than cities so as to give, in Robert M'cNamara's words, "... a possible opponent the strongest imaginable incentive to refrain from striking our own cities."⁷³ Morgenthau pointed out that the Second World War had shown that the kind of war being waged between industrial societies had made "the traditional distinction between military and non-military targets tenuous in

⁷⁰ 'Fighting the Last War', *The New Republic*, October 20, 1979, p.16.

⁷¹ 'The Four Paradoxes of Nuclear Strategy', pp.25-26.

⁷² He noted elsewhere the absurdity of the fact that weapons with the destructive capacity of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs had now (1962) come to be categorised as 'tactical'. See 'What Price Victory', *The New Republic*, February 20, 1971, p.23. Also see his letter to Lawrence A. Finkelstein, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, August 6, 1957, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 99.

⁷³ M'cNamara quoted in *ibid.* p.29.

theory and untenable in practice."⁷⁴ Any advantage gained in this respect from the use of more accurate missiles would be more than outweighed by the immensely greater destructive capacity of the hydrogen bomb. Morgenthau was absolutely right to challenge the bizarre notion that the hydrogen bomb could somehow also be a weapon of subtlety and discrimination.

For most of the 1950s and 1960s Morgenthau consistently maintained his central point that nuclear weapons posed unique problems when considered in historical context and that, consequently, efforts to treat them as normal components of warfare were deeply implausible. There are, however, two curious exceptions to this. In an article written in 1950 he claimed that, in fact, "the moral dilemma with which the H-bomb confronts the United States is different only in magnitude, but not in kind, from the dilemmas with which all the modern instruments of mass destruction, from the machine gun onwards, have confronted the conscience of the Western World."⁷⁵ This seems to be at odds with all his remarks on the subject elsewhere. The second deviation from his central thesis occurred in the mid-1950s when, for a very brief period, he appeared to at least entertain the possibility that nuclear weapons could have some sort of tactical application. Given what he took to be a Soviet superiority in conventional forces he argued that "the United States must prepare for, and fight if necessary, a limited atomic war, with the atomic ingredient carefully adapted to the challenge to be met; strong enough, at the very least, to avoid defeat but not so strong as to avoid all-out atomic retaliation."⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *ibid.* p.28.

⁷⁵ 'The H-Bomb and After', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. VI, No.3, March 1950, p.76.

⁷⁶ 'Has Atomic War Really Become Impossible', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. XII, No.1, January 1956, p.9. Jaap Nobel also quotes this section in his article on Morgenthau but he fails to mention the qualifying remarks which follow the critical passage. See Nobel, 'Morgenthau's Struggle with Power', pp.71-72.

It is important to point out that, even here, Morgenthau adds strong qualifying remarks. The political leaders of the United States, Morgenthau suggests, "... must bring to their tasks a blend of self-restraint and daring, which very few leaders in history have proven themselves to be capable of for any length of time" while simultaneously displaying "such an extraordinary degree of excellence as to border on the unfailing." The leadership of the Soviet Union, too, needs to possess similar qualities if a limited conflict is not to become a full-scale nuclear exchange.⁷⁷ These qualifications are so strong as to actually appear to challenge altogether the claim that the United States must stand ready to fight a tactical nuclear war. In any case as at no other time in public or in private did Morgenthau repeat the suggestion that it might be possible to place nuclear war on a rational footing we should, perhaps, set aside the claim as an aberration. It seems likely that Morgenthau had been influenced by the general intellectual currents of the mid-1950s, including Henry Kissinger's *Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy* published in the same year as Morgenthau's article (1956), in which Kissinger had argued that nuclear weapons could indeed be used as part of a coherent battlefield strategy.

The two decades from the late 1940s until the late 1960s marked the highwater point for the 'science' of strategy just as it did for the 'science' of politics in the United States. Having its methodological beginnings in the Operational Analysis employed in World War Two the science of strategy became ever more influential over the course of the Cold War as both the American global reach grew ever deeper and the nuclear arms race increased in velocity.⁷⁸ A host of new research techniques and methodologies; game theory, systems analysis, various forms of organisational and behavioural theories - many of them drawn from economics and political science - came to

⁷⁷ Morgenthau, 'Has Nuclear War Really Become Possible', p.9.

⁷⁸ The mathematical number-crunching made possible by computer technology provided a further fillip to the process.

be used in the policy-making process; in no small measure due to the influence of the Research and Nuclear Development (RAND) Corporation. The leaders of this methodological movement: Thomas Schelling, Albert Wohlsetter, Herman Kahn - the 'Wizards of Armageddon' in Fred Kaplan's memorable description - were marked by a level of mathematical acumen which had not previously been a part of the intellectual hinterland of social scientists.⁷⁹ Many of them looked with disdain upon the more usual methodological approaches to scholarship in the humanities adopted by Morgenthau and others. Albert Wohlsetter referred contemptuously to "the essay tradition."⁸⁰ This kind of criticism even took in some of the first post-war strategic thinkers including Bernard Brodie which led to a breakdown in the formerly close relationship between Brodie and Wohlsetter.⁸¹

Herman Kahn has been called 'the high priest of nuclear rationality' and there is little doubt that of those specifically devoted to the question of nuclear strategy (rather than say, nuclear physics) he had the highest public

⁷⁹ See Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983). One of their number was memorably lampooned in Stanley Kubrick's brilliant, satirical film *Dr Strangelove*. Dr Strangelove himself is played by Peter Sellers as a wheelchair-bound nuclear scientist with a fanatical antipathy towards the Soviet Union and an unfortunate habit of giving involuntary Nazi salutes! (The character speaks with a heavy German accent). The identity of the precise model for Dr Strangelove is unclear; Kaplan sees him as a direct parody of Herman Kahn while Fred Inglis detects a "shrieking image" of Werner von Braun with a dash, perhaps, of Edward Teller. Others have seen Henry Kissinger as a possible source of inspiration for Kubrick. See Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p.231; Fred Inglis, *The Cruel Peace: Everyday Life and the Cold War* (Basic Books, London, 1991) p.314.

⁸⁰ Wohlsetter quoted in Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p.81.

⁸¹ For more on the relationship between the two men see Kaplan, *ibid.* By the late 1940s Brodie had come to question the whole direction of strategic analysis in the United States and he expressed many of the same concerns registered by Morgenthau, specifically about combining modern technology with rational war aims and scepticism over the possibility of using nuclear weapons in a limited way. He also, rather unusually for a native-born American political scientist, expressed reservations about the American belief in science and scientific techniques in general. See his *Strategy in the Missile Age*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1959. It is difficult to know to what extent Brodie's criticisms are a reflection of his personal pique at being sidelined by the newcomers in the strategic community because of his lack of training in the new methods. In the same book he was, after all, still calling enthusiastically for economic methodology to be used in strategy. He was, nonetheless, a man with an intellectual hinterland much broader than most of his colleagues in strategic circles and it is likely, at least in part, that he was in a better position to understand the intellectual problems involved with the new methodological approaches.

profile.⁸² A man of both enormous bulk and energy he was a powerful influence upon the strategists of his generation and it is no accident that much of Morgenthau's critique of the enterprise of nuclear strategy was directed at Kahn specifically, together with the so-called 'Father of the H-Bomb', Edward Teller. Morgenthau was highly critical of both Kahn and Teller in his May 1962 University of Chicago public lectures *Reflections on the Nuclear Age* and he took another swipe at the pair in the same year whilst reviewing Teller's ghostwritten book *The Legacy of Hiroshima*.⁸³ In his private correspondence and letters he was, if anything, even more scathing especially with reference to Kahn.⁸⁴

Upon reading what is supposed to be Kahn's magnum opus, *On Thermonuclear War*, it is hard not to agree with Morgenthau. The book is replete with the language of positivism and the appropriate buzzwords of the American science of politics. In the introduction Kahn announces that he will adopt the 'systems analysis point of view' and there are frequent references to what he calls 'objective studies' and the need to discuss the problems of war on a 'factual' rather than 'emotional' basis.⁸⁵ What appears as 'objective' and 'factual' in the fantastic world of Herman Kahn can seem rather different to those not a part of this parallel universe. When Kahn complains that "the average citizen has a dour attitude towards planners who say that if we do thus and so it will not be 40 million dead - it will be 20 million dead" one can only be grateful for the robust good sense of the 'average citizen'.⁸⁶ Elsewhere he frets that "the European deterrent ... can only inflict about as much

⁸² For the above description of Kahn see Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p.222.

⁸³ A copy of the public lectures can be found in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 171. For his review see 'Another Legacy of Hiroshima: The Partially Scientific Mind', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. XV III, No.6, June 1962, pp.34-36. Also see the cleverly titled 'Off to the wars in a think-tank', *New York Herald Tribune*, June 20, 1965. An even more fiercely critical attack upon Kahn came nearly a decade later in his *Science: Servant or Master?* (New American Library, New York, 1972) pp.126-136.

⁸⁴ See, for example, his letter to Louis Halle of November 24, 1964, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 26.

⁸⁵ Herman Kahn, *On Thermonuclear War* (Princeton University Press, 1960) pp.VIII, 21, 47.

⁸⁶ *ibid.* p.20.

damage on the Soviet Union as the Soviets suffered in World War II", that is in a matter of days this apparently inadequate European arsenal could match the destruction meted out over four years of the bloodiest conflict in human history: surely enough deterrence to satisfy all but nuclear strategists!⁸⁷ He also ponders a scenario where the Soviets, by way of sabotage, seek as a *casus belli* to have a nuclear missile launched against their own territory!⁸⁸ Had Kahn been handed the reigns of American government he would have devoted between forty and fifty percent of gross national product to the defence budget and, amongst other inanities, would have spent one hundred million (1960) dollars on the purchase and distribution of radiation meters!⁸⁹ And in truth Kahn actually had no better idea than anyone else how the United States might recover from a thermonuclear exchange but he appeared to believe that the very act of assigning utterly speculative figures to wildly implausible scenarios gave his work a 'factual' and 'objective' status which he held to be lacking elsewhere.⁹⁰ This, I would suggest, is the 'romance of numbers' that Weber had identified in America in its most extreme and disturbing form.

As bizarre as some of Kahn's suggestions were, he was influential enough not to be dismissed as a harmless eccentric. As Joseph Nye has pointed out, "to the extent that planning and discussion of prevailing in war after repeated massive nuclear strikes encourages notions that nuclear war can be engaged in with tolerable human and moral consequences, it is malicious in its effects."⁹¹ The kind of state and society envisaged by Kahn where half of the gross national product is devoted to the military and massive civil defence schemes seem rather more than less likely to find itself

⁸⁷ *ibid.* p.21.

⁸⁸ *ibid.* p.31.

⁸⁹ *ibid.* pp.27, 86.

⁹⁰ *On Thermonuclear War* is, as Morgenthau described it, "a piece of political science fiction." See *Science: Servant or Master?*, p.136.

⁹¹ Nye, *Nuclear Ethics*, p.105.

involved, for one reason or another, in a major nuclear exchange. One is glad to learn, for example, that in 1961, a year before the Cuban Missile Crisis, John F. Kennedy's budget submission to Congress for seven hundred million dollars for civil defence projects was hacked down to eighty million.⁹² Outside the nuclear realm an important consequence was that the methods employed for nuclear strategy spilled over into other areas of American government. As we shall see in chapter four, the faith in rational analysis and the managerial and behavioural methodologies so much in vogue came to be applied to the war in Vietnam with calamitous results.⁹³

Though nuclear weapons presented unique difficulties they were also part of a broader problem with technology, which in turn was a reflection of what Weber called "the disenchantment of the world" and Morgenthau the "rationalization of life and world." In his writing on technology and modernity Morgenthau was consciously placing himself in the stream of modernists who had wrestled with the problem in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Marshall Berman has pointed out, an important difference between many of the modernists of the nineteenth century and their twentieth century counterparts is that the former have also seen the astonishing technological developments of the period as opportunity as well or even, in the case of Marx, instead of threat. They retained enough of a sense of the possibilities of human agency to at least hope that technology could be harnessed for the greater benefit of humanity. Beginning with Weber, however, technology comes increasingly to be portrayed as one of the fundamental reinforcements of that suffocating 'iron cage' of modernity and its attendant specialisation, centralisation and bureaucratisation.⁹⁴

⁹² These figures come from Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, p.314.

⁹³ On the links between the nuclear calculus and the methods employed in Vietnam see Kaplan, *ibid.*, pp.327-337. Kaplan sees Robert M'cNamaras Vietnam strategy as essentially a version of counterforce adopted for conventional war (p.329).

⁹⁴ Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*, pp.27-29.

In one sense this had always been a concern of Morgenthau's, as with the critique of 'Scientific Man' in his first book.⁹⁵ As has already been suggested though, it is also true that 'the crisis of modernity' assumes an increasingly prominent position from the 1950s on and by the time we reach 1972 it has become the main theme of his book *Science: Servant or Master?* which, if anything, provides an even bleaker vision than that contained in *Scientific Man Vs Power Politics* a quarter of a century earlier. "Technology as applied science", Morgenthau writes, "threatens to destroy man and his social and natural environment through war and has already gone through social dislocation and pollution in destroying the social and natural environment that makes healthy and civilised life possible."⁹⁶

In more specific terms Morgenthau felt that modern technology had contributed to a grave decline in the standards of public life. The very sophistication of twentieth century technology had served to discourage the public scrutiny of its management: a development the new technocratic, managerial and scientific elite was only too happy to encourage. This had, in particular, taken the determination of military and foreign policies beyond proper democratic control:

"Thus small elites within the executive branch can commit us to informal alliances and undeclared wars; they can change military strategies and weapons systems - and whatever public debate exists is like the chorus of a Greek tragedy, praising or bewailing what has already been done."⁹⁷

This process was accentuated by the extreme emphasis placed on the importance of secrecy within the executive branch. He also lamented what he saw as public apathy. The ascendancy of scientific elites had been aided by

⁹⁵ For other references to the problems posed by modern technology see 'The Evil of Power', p.517 and 'The Decline of Democratic Government', *New Republic*, Vol.17, No.19, December, 1957, pp.14-15.

⁹⁶ Morgenthau, *Science: Servant or Master?*, p.3. The ecological element adds a new dimension to Morgenthau's pre-existing concerns.

⁹⁷ *ibid.* p.102.

the "abdication" of "politically responsible authorities and the politically conscious public."⁹⁸

This amounted to a rather pronounced change in emphasis on Morgenthau's part. In his earlier writing he had been much more concerned about the impact of the masses upon political life and the problem of *preserving* the necessarily secretive arrangements necessary in order for diplomacy to flourish. He was now, to the contrary, troubled by the *lack* of direct public scrutiny of the executive branch and the presence of *too much* secrecy in its dealings. In the end Morgenthau reached what amounted to an entirely Weberian position: little faith in the virtues of the general public but even less in its political masters. As we shall see in greater detail in chapter four, this change was at least in part the result of Morgenthau's personal clash with American government and his profound dismay at the calamitous war being pursued in Vietnam.

Beyond the general problem posed by modern technology it was also the case that modern institutions had compromised the ability of intellectuals to act as critics in the political sphere. James Burnham's books of the early 1940s, *The Managerial Revolution* (1941) and *The Machiavellians* (1944) suggested that there was something like a 'natural' tendency for authority to become concentrated under the auspices of an 'elite' of managers and executive decision-makers.⁹⁹ This 'elite' presided over the organisations - government agencies, corporations, foundations, special interest groups, the mass media - which loomed ever larger in the political sphere of post-war America. Morgenthau's particular concern was with the way in which these institutions impacted upon the critical independence of intellectual life. It was a time of a massive expansion of higher education in the United States and to the extra money becoming available through this channel was added the

⁹⁸ *ibid.* p.108.

⁹⁹ On this point see Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* (Harper and Row, New York, 1985) p.77.

largesse of corporations and, especially, the charitable foundations. Morgenthau was right to view these developments with suspicion though, at the same time, he was not above joining the general rush to the trough himself¹⁰⁰

We now know, as a result of Frances Stonor Saunders' excellent book, the extent to which many of the foundations were used as public fronts for the secret channelling of money from the Central Intelligence Agency and other government agencies.¹⁰¹ A staggering amount of money was funnelled by the CIA through the foundations as part of its strategy of 'promoting the non-communist left' though in practice the pot of gold was so large that beneficiaries were drawn from a much wider stratum of American intellectual life.¹⁰² Much of the activity was co-ordinated through the offices of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom and journals like *Commentary*, *The New Leader* and *Partisan Review*, all of which, incidentally, carried articles by Morgenthau on a regular basis. The list of intellectual luminaries who were aware of the CIA's involvement includes, according to Stonor Saunders,

¹⁰⁰ The 'Center for the Study of American Foreign Policy', established under Morgenthau's auspices at the University of Chicago in 1950, was supported with a Lilly Endowment grant of nearly 90,000 dollars over three years which was not, however, renewed. 'Emergency grants' from the Rockefeller and Carnegie Foundations kept the centre running in 1953 until longer-term funding was secured from Carnegie in 1954 (75,000 dollars over three years) and renewed in 1957 with a further 142,500 dollars awarded over a five year period. Towards the end of his life Morgenthau received a Rockefeller grant of nearly 10,000 dollars for a proposed book on Abraham Lincoln. See the documents in boxes 50, 67, 68 and 69 of the *Morgenthau Papers*.

¹⁰¹ Frances Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (Granta books, London, 1999). The authors of many of the earlier works dealing with the impact of the foundations were entirely unaware, it seems, of the behind-the-scenes role of the CIA. See, for example, Robert A. McCaughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1984). The foundations were once described as "a golden half-way house between Washington and academia" but they now appear to have been rather closer to Washington than the academy! The description is Stanley Hoffman's in his 'An American Social Science: International Relations', *Daedalus*, Vol.106, No.3, Summer 1977, p.50.

¹⁰² *ibid.* pp.134-135. Large amounts of money were also made available for suitable cultural activities in Western Europe. In reading Stonor Saunders I was struck, not for the first time, by the pointlessness of the historiographical debate over whether America's global activities were to be ascribed to geo-strategic, economic or other mono-causal motivations or spheres of interest. The project was, undoubtedly, global in every respect.

George Kennan, Reinhold Niebuhr, Daniel Bell, Isaiah Berlin and Walter Lacqueur.

Was Morgenthau also aware of the conspiracy? Though his name receives no mention in Stonor Saunders' book, Kenneth Thompson was in a senior position at the Rockefeller Foundation for much of the time and must, surely, have become aware at some point of the source of much of his funding.¹⁰³ There is, perhaps not surprisingly, nothing in the correspondence from Thompson to indicate that he had told Morgenthau, nor is there anything else in Morgenthau's papers to suggest that he knew. It is clear, however, that by 1967 at least some elements of the CIA's intervention into intellectual life had become public knowledge. In an address given at the University of Chicago Morgenthau referred to the (unnamed) editor of an eminent magazine who actually was an agent of the CIA. "With which editor", Morgenthau asked rhetorically, "can one afford to consort without having incontrovertible proof that he is not an agent either of the CIA or some other secret agency?"¹⁰⁴ He further decried the damage done to "the ties of trust which bind the members of a healthy society together."¹⁰⁵ It is, I think, unlikely that Morgenthau would have accepted foundation money had he known that its source was the Central Intelligence Agency. I doubt very much, in full knowledge of the kinds of duplicity of which we are all capable, whether Morgenthau would have knowingly permitted his sense of independence and intellectual integrity to be compromised in this way.

It is, perhaps, worth pointing out in passing that the consequences of the CIA's intervention into cultural and intellectual life were not wholly pernicious. The sheer amount of the lucre available and the fact that a

¹⁰³ Stonor Saunders describes the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations as "... conscious instruments of covert US foreign policy with directors and officers who were closely connected to, or even members of American intelligence." *ibid.* p.139.

¹⁰⁴ 'The Intellectual in Government', Address given at the University of Chicago, April 13, 1967. This quotation comes from page 15 of the transcript contained in Box 172 of the *Morgenthau Papers*.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.* p.15.

considerable proportion of it was not given with a specific end in mind in each instance meant that some good was achieved along the way. For example, one of the strangest stories to emerge from Stonor Saunders is that the CIA played a crucial role in both financing and organising the broader critical support for the artistic movement of Abstract Expressionism. This was undertaken for two reasons: firstly, to encourage an art form which could be seen to be genuinely indigenous to the United States and also capable of attracting critical acclaim in Europe and, secondly and perhaps most importantly, because Abstract Expressionism was as different as could possibly be imagined from the Social Realism of Soviet Art. At one point an utterly bizarre situation arose whereby Congressional philistines were attacking the foundations for their support of Abstract Expressionism (often using the by-now-familiar pejorative of 'Un-American') unaware that the movement's funding was being provided via another arm of government!¹⁰⁶ It is also clearly the case that journals like *Partisan Review* and *Commentary* were much more than the vessels of propaganda that their Soviet equivalents were. Editorial influence was exercised judiciously and it was still possible to print articles which were critical of American government.

Ultimately, however, this fails to provide sufficient compensation for the harm done in broader terms. It is easy enough to understand how so many intellectuals came to have critical faculties dulled by their close ties to the foundations and the official agencies of American Government. For a period of around thirty years or so intellectuals had been able to at least partially transcend their customary position of low esteem and prestige in American society. Intellectuals began to come to Washington in substantial numbers during the New Deal and this initial involvement was dramatically

¹⁰⁶ See Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper*, pp.249-277.

intensified during the Second World War.¹⁰⁷ This initial involvement was sustained during the 1950s in spite of the difficulties imposed by the McCarthy witch hunts and the general anti-intellectualism of the Eisenhower Regime. And in the 1960s intellectuals were summoned to the court of Camelot by a President who liked them to be associated with his administration even if, in reality, he was no more intellectually inclined than most of his twentieth century predecessors. This amounted to a remarkable turnaround in fortunes, as Edward Shils has pointed out, "...from the condition of being peripheral in a society which they believed was culturally provincial, American intellectuals were even less able to resist the attractive power of the centrality in the United States." ¹⁰⁸

Most did not go to Washington to serve in any direct capacity but instead remained in academe and drew upon the largesse of the universities and the foundations. In International Relations the foundations were directly responsible for a large increase in the number of academic posts in addition to providing fellowships for PhD students.¹⁰⁹ Once again it would be wrong to condemn these developments without qualification. In many cases there was no direct *quid pro quo* involved and no doubt many worthwhile areas of intellectual life received financial support which would not otherwise have been available.

One can, nevertheless, see that in the broadest terms there were some harmful consequences. The funding from government, foundations and, in some cases, corporations was not, after all, provided on the basis that all intellectual endeavour was equally worth supporting. Even if in many

¹⁰⁷ Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers*, pp.165-167. And as early as 1936 Walter Lippmann was warning of "the corrupting effects of government on intellectuals." See Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (The Bedley Head Ltd., London, 1980) p.320

¹⁰⁸ Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Power*, p.171 What Shils failed to mention, however, is that he was himself unable to resist the lure of the 'centrality'. His name crops up on a regular basis in Stonor Saunders as a function of his intimate involvement with the (sic) Committee for Cultural Freedom.

¹⁰⁹ McCaughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise*, p.218.

instances no pay-off was expected in general terms funding was provided on the basis that research would lead to some sort of instrumentally useful dividend. This, of course, supported a strong bias in favour of applied research at the expense of theoretical and philosophical contemplation: instrumentally rational rather than value rational activity. As has already been suggested, this provided a form of reinforcement to behavioralism in the United States.¹¹⁰ At one end, almost paradoxically, the closer connections between foundations and government on the one hand and intellectuals on the other encouraged a form of academic life that was even less concerned with political engagement than with questions of importance only to other academics and of, frankly, trivial value in *any* wider sense.¹¹¹ This was the phenomenon of the so-called 'new scholasticism' condemned by Morgenthau and Barrington Moore among others.¹¹² At the other extreme the involvement with government resulted in some academics engaging in ethically questionable activities, as for example in the various Army and CIA sponsored projects in so called 'counter-insurgency'.¹¹³ It also gave rise to a new breed of public intellectual - the Kahns, Kissingers, McNamaras, Bundys - who brought such an overwhelming faith in rationality and in their own abilities to manage American foreign affairs that it amounted to an especially

¹¹⁰ Morgenthau wrote to Kenneth Thompson at the Rockefeller Foundation with the suggestion that "... the Foundation ought to redirect the efforts of scholars away from formalistic enterprises toward the substantive problems of International Relations ... " In his reply Thompson claimed that 'behaviorally minded types' in the foundations were responsible for the current state of affairs. See Morgenthau's letter of January 7, 1954 and Thompson's reply of March 1954 in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 57. During a lecture Morgenthau once observed that "if the counting of leaves were a social or political phenomenon... the Ford Foundation would have given us half a million dollars." (!) See the notes for his Political Science lecture, Sept. 18, 1970, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 173.

¹¹¹ Anyone who has ever had to plough through the vast tomes churned out in the 1950s on electoral behaviour or the minutiae of the American system of government will understand what I have in mind here.

¹¹² See Barrington Moore Jr, 'The New Scholasticism and the Study of Politics', *World Politics*, Vol. VI, 1953, pp.122-138. Morgenthau developed the theme in his 'Reflections on the State of Political Science', *The Review of Politics*, Vol.17, No.4, October 1955, pp.431-460; 'Common Sense and Theories of International Politics', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. XXI, 1967, pp.207-214.

¹¹³ Mc Caughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise*, p.229.

dangerous form of hubris. In all cases the net result was an intelligentsia, particularly that portion of it situated in International Relations, that was less willing or less able to engage critically in the political sphere. As we shall see in chapter four, it is hardly surprising that so few of the dissenting voices being raised in the mid to late 1960s were drawn from International Relations.

Morgenthau as American Critic

The question of the appropriate role for intellectuals in their societies is one which has existed across national boundaries. To assume, however, that the fundamental problems are universal because intellectuals are the most cosmopolitan group in all modern societies is to assume rather too much.¹¹⁴ We have, for one thing, seen only too often over the course of the twentieth century - the First World War being a prime example - how quickly cosmopolitanism came to be replaced by the worst kind of national chauvinism. It is also the case that there have been important differences within individual societies. The nexus between intellectuals and government is of more or less importance everywhere but local institutional differences can bring about variations upon the theme. The specifics of the relationship are also coloured, naturally enough, by local social and cultural dynamics.

In the American context, as George Steiner has pointed out, "the very concept of an intelligentsia, of an elite infected with the leprosy of abstract thought, is radically alien to the essential American circumstance."¹¹⁵ The United States is defined, Steiner claims, by "an eschatology of monetary-

¹¹⁴ For this claim see Szacki, 'Intellectuals between Politics and Culture', p.270.

¹¹⁵ George Steiner, 'The Archives of Eden', in *No Passion Spent: Essays 1978-1996* (Faber and Faber, London, 1996, p.285). This essential disregard for intellectual life is also a feature of Great Britain and Australia, the other anglophone countries with which I am familiar, though with perhaps not quite the same degree of intensity as in the United States. This is undoubtedly (for better *and* for worse!) very different historically from the situation for intellectuals in, say, France and Germany.

material success" where "the central and categorical imperative [is] to make money" and "*Fortuna* is fortune".¹¹⁶ Though, as has already been suggested, this general position was at least partially suspended for some of the period from the mid-1930s to the late 1960s it, nevertheless, placed a further difficulty in the path of the critically-minded public intellectual. Even during this period it was apparent that politicians so inclined could tap into a well of anti-intellectual feeling when required, as Joseph McCarthy and his followers demonstrated in the 1950s. Lyndon Johnson too, when he had abandoned efforts to woo the dissidents, was quite prepared to play the populist card when tensions were escalating over Vietnam.

The 1950s were, in general, the period in which American intellectuals grappled with the problem of modernity in the way that their German counterparts had some fifty or more years earlier. It would not be correct to intimate that Morgenthau was alone in raising troubling questions about the impact of modernity in general and in the United States specifically. Many of his fellow sceptics were, of course, fellow Europeans: Adorno, Strauss, Voeglin, Arendt et al. There was, however, also a relatively small group of native-born critics whose number included Richard Hofstadter, Dwight Macdonald and, perhaps most notably of all, C. Wright Mills.

It has been said of Mills that "of all the post-war writers, no one seemed more alienated, more at odds with the political orthodoxies of his time, and more sweeping in his indictment of modern America..."¹¹⁷ Of the aforementioned it is Mills whose take on modernity most closely resembled that of Max Weber. Rather than class per se, his emphasis was much more upon the impact of the modern division of labour and its attendant

¹¹⁶ Steiner, 'The Archives of Eden', p.289. I am always struck by the eagerness with which officials from the public sector in the United States turn to money making on a large scale upon leaving office or the bureaucracy; almost as though no career can be deemed properly successful or fulfilled without the additional mark of substantial wealth.

¹¹⁷ Richard H. Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* (Harper and Row, New York, 1985, p.249).

bureaucratisation. His particular concern was with the elite which ran American institutions and, as he perceived it, sought to manipulate the nation's nominally democratic institutions. His conception of the role of the intellectual was very much like that of Morgenthau in its insistence that intellectuals had to remain formally separate from, but nevertheless relevant to, the public realm. As the "last craftsmen" of modernity (effectively 'free-floating' agents) intellectuals were in a unique position to transcend the political and cultural limitations prevailing elsewhere in American society. Like Morgenthau, Mills had no qualms about writing for journals at the popular end of the market and he shared Morgenthau's disdain for those intellectuals who had cast their lot with the government or the corporations or the foundations and pursued safe, nominally apolitical subjects of study. He was equally scathing of those who had accepted their alienation and retreated from the public sphere altogether. And, like Morgenthau and so many of the other dissenting voices of the 1950s and 1960s, Mills was a prickly, often difficult man who refused to affect the air of amiable clubbability that seemed to be a feature of political science in the United States.¹¹⁸

His dissenting voice was, however, very much in the minority in the American academy of the 1950s for, characteristically, and in complete contrast to the German experience, a group of American intellectuals had moved to embrace the very developments that Morgenthau and others had viewed with such trepidation. Their ideas received their most famous explication in Daniel Bell's *The End of Ideology*.¹¹⁹ Where some critics saw an undifferentiated, lumpen mass, Bell pointed to a nation of 'joiners' who were highly active in all manner of voluntary associations. The apathy of voters as indicated by low turnouts in elections was not evidence of social crisis but rather, according to Seymour Lipset in his *Political Man*, an indication of social

¹¹⁸ I draw this summary of Mills from Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, pp.249-261.

¹¹⁹ Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (The Free Press, New York, 1962).

stability and individuals who were generally content with their lot.¹²⁰ Where critics like Adorno pointed to the commodification of culture, Bell suggested that rising levels of education amongst the population actually translated into a wider appreciation of culture.¹²¹ Where critics saw an American society stratified by the hierarchies of race, class and/or technocratic elites Bell defended what he saw as the essential pluralism of American society which, when supplemented with government intervention in the form of the welfare state and the general institutions of the mixed economy, provided for something at least approximating an equality of opportunity. "Behind the theory of social disorganization", Bell claimed, "lies a romantic - and somewhat false - notion of the past, which sees society as having once been made up of small, "organic", close-knit communities (called *Gemeinschaften* in the terminology of the sociologists) that were shattered by industrialism and modern life, and replaced by a large, impersonal, "atomistic" society (called *Gesellschaft*) that is unable to provide the basic gratifications, and call forth the loyalties, that the other communities knew. These distinctions are, however, completely riddled by value judgments."¹²² It was no accident, Bell suggested, "that the major theorists of mass society - Karl Mannheim, Emil Lederer, Hannah Arendt - have been European, and derived their concept from European experience."¹²³ Bell accepted that social and cultural change in America following World War Two was probably greater than elsewhere "but the assumption that social disorder and anomie inevitably attend such change is not borne out in this case. This may be due to the singular fact that the United States is probably the first large society in history to have change

¹²⁰ Pells, *The Liberal Mind*, pp.144-145. Mills referred scathingly to this element of the thesis as an "intellectual celebration of apathy". Mills quoted by Stephen W. Rousseas and James Fagin, 'American Politics and the End of Ideology', in Irving Louis Horowitz (ed.), *The New Sociology: Essays in Social Science and Social Theory in Honor of C. Wright Mills* (Oxford University Press, London, 1966) p.273.

¹²¹ *ibid.* pp.32-33.

¹²² *ibid.* p.27.

¹²³ *ibid.* p.99.

and innovation "built into" its culture."¹²⁴ He further stressed the advantages conferred by America's rich endowment of natural resources, the absence of a feudal tradition, and the general 'pragmatic ethos'.

At the end of his book Bell attempted to make clear what he meant by *The End of Ideology*.¹²⁵ It did not, he stressed, mean that ideas had ceased to be important. By 'ideology' he had a specifically nineteenth century notion in mind of the mostly leftist intellectuals of Marxian hue with their plans for the transformation of humanity. Given the calamitous historical events of the first half of the twentieth century, "few serious minds believe any longer that one can set down "blueprints" and through "social engineering" bring about a new utopia of social harmony." The other political philosophies of the nineteenth century had also lost their 'intellectual force'. In the West conservatives and liberals alike now accepted, to a greater or lesser extent, the existence of a welfare state, the mixed economy and political pluralism. To be sure, outside the West states in Africa and Asia were fashioning "new ideologies of industrialization, modernization, Pan-Arabism, color, and nationalism" which were driven by the imperatives of "economic development and national power" rather than the older humanistic and universalistic creed of nineteenth century intellectuals. In the West though - by implication the only area of real significance - "the old passions are spent."¹²⁶ The end of ideology does not and should not mean the end of the quest for utopia as men will still need "... some vision of their potential, some manner of fusing passion with intelligence. Yet the ladder to the City of Heaven can no longer be a "faith ladder" but an empirical one: a utopia has to specify *where* one wants to go, *how* to get there, the costs of the enterprise,

¹²⁴ *ibid.* pp.37,98.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* pp.393-405.

¹²⁶ Francis Fukuyama, of course, makes precisely the same argument in his *The End of History and the Last Man*.

and the realization of, and justification for the determination of *who* is to pay."¹²⁷

The whole 'End of Ideology' enterprise was grossly shortsighted. One is struck, above all, by the absence of any real historical sense in the writing; the lack of any feel for historical contingency. It seemed to assume, for one thing, that the business cycle had come to an end and that the full employment and general prosperity of the Eisenhower years would become a permanent feature of the landscape, requiring only the occasional tweak of Keynesian demand management to keep the mixed economy in good order. And though Bell protested that he did not mean to imply that humanity had reached some form of final stage of socio-economic development in the form of the United States of the 1950s, it is hard to conclude otherwise from a reading of *The End of Ideology*. At no point does Bell even begin to speculate about the kinds of historical developments which could, and indeed did, re-ignite ideological conflict in the 1960s. He reveals no awareness of the kinds of nascent contradictions, most notably that of race, which would re-surface just a few years after the book's publication. The irony was that the 'End of Ideology' was nothing of the sort in that it actually amounted in many respects to a familiar reassertion of American exceptionalism which must itself be a form of ideology.

Though long part of the tapestry of American nationalism, the notion of an exceptional America had been somewhat muted in the preceding decades under the impact of the disappointments of the 1920s and the Great Depression of the 1930s.¹²⁸ In the 1950s, however, a new generation of

¹²⁷ Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p.405.

¹²⁸ A detailed exploration of the historical origins of American exceptionalism is beyond our scope here, but it is obviously of long standing and can be found in a wide variety of sources. The Puritan metaphor of a 'City on a Hill' is one example. The historiography of the nineteenth century is another. George Bancroft, the most influential American historian of the first half of the nineteenth century and beyond, wrote an epic, romantic account of the American Revolution as a struggle for human liberty. One only has to examine the often strikingly similar inaugural addresses of American Presidents across more than two hundred years to see the popular resonance of the theme of American exceptionalism.

historians had, for example, de-emphasised the social struggle which historians like Frederick Jackson Turner and Charles Beard had identified in American history, finding instead a pervasive harmony of interests.¹²⁹ In international affairs the notion of American exceptionalism had come to be linked by some with America's newly acquired global reach. No longer content with mere isolation from the corruption of the Old World it was now the American historical mission to re-cast the world in its own image.

A somewhat less strong representation of this theme was contained in the notion of a reluctant, essentially pacifistic American compelled by duty to defend the world against the unlimited designs of an evil Soviet Empire in a Manichean struggle of light against darkness; good against evil. As the Cold War intensified this was precisely the kind of argument being advanced by many American academics. As Frank Tannenbaum put it in his article *The American Tradition in Foreign Relations* :

" Time, place and fortune have wrought their own special imprint upon the American conscience and endowed our folk with an ethical bias peculiarly their own. The indefinable something we call the American outlook adds up to a philosophy of life and a political morality."¹³⁰

What follows is a grossly distorted rationalisation of the history of American involvement in international politics based upon the thesis that the juridical equality of the United States themselves had been transferred to the international realm and become a guiding principle of American foreign policy.¹³¹ Hence the Monroe Doctrine, far from reflecting a claim to continental hegemony, actually represented an American defence of the

¹²⁹ Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, pp.148-149. As Pells points out, it did require some ingenuity to fit the Civil War into this sort of historical outline! On occasion the historical amnesia assumed astonishing proportions. Daniel Bell asserted that "it has been one of the glories of the United States that politics has always been a pragmatic give-and-take rather than a series of wars-to-the-death." (!) Bell, *The End of Ideology*, p.121.

¹³⁰ Frank Tannenbaum, 'The American Tradition in Foreign Relations', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.30, No.1, October 1951, p.31.

¹³¹ The Civil War, naturally, receives only the briefest mention in this one-sided narrative.

continent against the rapacious colonies in Europe. The 'Open Door' policy towards China reflected a genuine, disinterested attempt to defend Chinese territorial integrity rather than the best available strategy for the maintenance of American strategic and commercial interests. The 'Good Neighbour' policy "is the logical sequence to a tradition as old as our government."¹³² Theodore Roosevelt's 'big stick' formula, McKinley's annexation of the Philippines, the war with Mexico and the absorption of Texas are set to one side.

Suitably equipped with this one-sided reading of American history Tannenbaum could be unequivocal over the apportionment of blame for rising global tension:

"The enormous energy of the United States has been disciplined by the ethical conception of political equality, and harnessed to the ideal of collective security resting upon a federation of co-ordinate states. These are the grounds of our difference with Russia. We are not quarrelling over economic interests, political doctrines or her internal policies, even if we do not like them. We cannot accept Russia's denial of the coördinate character of other states. We do not believe in the Big Five, the Big Three or the Big Two. The day the Soviet Union learns, if it can, to accept its neighbours as of equal rank with itself, the World will be united again and the Iron Curtain will melt into thin air. Our quarrel is not about Russia, but about her contempt for the independent sovereignty of other nations."¹³³

Tannenbaum is of particular interest for our purposes because his article was written very clearly as a reply to Morgenthau and other realists. "If

¹³² Tannenbaum, *The American Tradition*, p.33. As the peoples of Latin and South America discovered during the Cold War, the good neighbourliness of the United States lasted only as long as they submitted to North American strategic and economic interests.

¹³³ *ibid.* p.50. In passing, it is worth noting that in other respects Tannenbaum resonated with the broader themes of American political science which were explored in earlier chapters. He argued, for example, that the United States "had never elaborated its implicit values into a conscious doctrine" and that this was "evidence of strength and vitality" as "a formal ideology is an unconscious apology, a claim for validity that needs to be defended." (p.32) He had earlier made a Deweyesque defense of American intellectual pragmatism. See Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science*, p.113.

in the present crisis", Tannenbaum wrote in his article, "[Americans] are troubled and confused by the contradictory policies urged upon them, it is because some of their counselors speak a language alien to American experience and indifferent to the inspiration of American polity."¹³⁴ He also warned that "the doctrines of "power politics" now being preached by such persuasive scholars as Professor Hans J. Morgenthau... have always led to war and often to national suicide."¹³⁵ In a letter to George Kennan, Morgenthau claimed that Tannenbaum's article had been specifically commissioned by Hamilton Fish Armstrong, the editor of *Foreign Affairs*, in order to challenge him publicly.¹³⁶

Morgenthau's response was as robust as usual. It had been fundamental to his general criticism of political liberalism to reject a link between domestic political forms and international politics but he now took the opportunity to look specifically - and critically - at the history of American foreign relations and at the formation of the United States itself. With Tannenbaum as a specific target he pointed out that "the historian who wishes to replace the balance of power as the guiding principle of American foreign policy with the "humanitarian and pacific traditions" of the "coördinate state" must first of all explain how it has come about that the thirteen original states expanded into the full breadth and a good deal of the length of a continent, until today the strategic frontiers of the United States run parallel to the length of Asia and along the River Elbe. If such are the

¹³⁴ Tannenbaum, *The American Tradition in Foreign Relations*, p.31.

¹³⁵ *ibid.* p.47.

¹³⁶ Letter to George Kennan, March 7, 1952, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 33. As evidence Morgenthau encloses copies of letters exchanged with Armstrong the previous year which are either not in the Morgenthau Papers or were overlooked by me. Morgenthau also intimated that during unsuccessful negotiations between the Radio Office of the University of Chicago and Tannenbaum it became clear that Armstrong had initiated the article. He also insisted that because of Armstrong's personal prejudice a bias existed in *Foreign Affairs* "...against a realistic approach to American foreign policy."

results of policies based upon "humanitarian and pacific traditions", never in the history of the world has such virtue been more bountifully rewarded!"¹³⁷

In more specific terms was it not easier, Morgenthau asked rhetorically, "to explain the successive shifts of American support from Great Britain to France and back again from the beginning of King George's War in 1744 to the War of 1812 in terms of the "coördinate state" than in terms of the balance of power?" Similar questions could be asked of the Monroe Doctrine and at many other points in American history. In fact, "one could go on and pick out at random any foreign policy pursued by the United States from the beginning to 1919 and one would hardly find a policy, with the exception perhaps of the War of 1812, which could not be made intelligible by reference to the national interest defined in terms of power - political, military, and economic - rather than by reference to the principle of the "coördinate state". Moreover, the foundations of the American nation were not fundamentally different from those elsewhere:

"Why should we not admit that American foreign policy has been generally hardheaded and practical and at times ruthless? Why should we deny Jefferson's cunning, say, in the Puget Sound affair, the cruelty with which the indians were treated, and the faithlessness with which the treaties with the indians were cast aside? We know that this is the way all nations are when their interests are at stake - so cruel, so faithless, so cunning."¹³⁸

This element of Morgenthau's critique at least was of manifestly good sense. Nations have almost invariably been formed at the expense of other groups and it was one of the great conceits of 'liberal' nations like the United States and Australia that they were for a very long time able to pretend that their own historical experiences had somehow been otherwise. Morgenthau

¹³⁷ Morgenthau, 'Another "Great Debate": The National Interest of the United States', p.964.

¹³⁸ *ibid.* pp.970-971. Some years later he observed that most American history had been written from the perspective of white immigrants to the exclusion of blacks and Indians. See 'Historical Justice and the Cold War', *New York Review of Books*, June 1969, p.2.

describes it as "the fantasy of American innocence."¹³⁹ He further lambasted Tannenbaum for adopting a method based upon accepting the official remarks of American statesmen at face value which would, inevitably, present humanitarian justifications for American action. A world history written with the use of this method would lead to the conclusion "that from Timur to Hitler and Stalin the foreign policies of all nations were inspired by the ideals of humanitarianism and pacifism."¹⁴⁰ The central message of Morgenthau's political realism, then, was that the United States was not, and could not, be free of the moral ambiguities of international politics. To believe that it was could only be dangerous in a world where war could mean the unleashing of an almost unlimited capacity for destruction.

How successful, then, was this challenge to American exceptionalism? Morgenthau once wrote that in his view "the impact of realism on the Acheson era in the State Department has been very considerable" but elsewhere he despaired at his lack of influence.¹⁴¹ He is reported to have said of his campaigning against the Vietnam War that "I might as well have collected butterflies."¹⁴² That Morgenthau, Kennan and Niebuhr et al had at least some impact upon intellectual life is clear enough, perhaps most of all in the area of diplomatic history which received confirmation when the doyen of American diplomatic historians, Samuel Flagg Bemis, wrote a laudatory review of Morgenthau's *In Defense of the National Interest*.¹⁴³ The influence of

¹³⁹ Morgenthau, 'Another Great Debate', p.969.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.* p.966.

¹⁴¹ His remark on the impact of realism comes from a letter to Fred Friedel, April 9, 1963, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 20.

¹⁴² Michael Nicholson heard Morgenthau make this remark at a conference in Italy in 1974 and cites it in his 'What's the use of International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, vol.26, no.2, April 2000, p.189.

¹⁴³ "He has grasped as few native-born students have the historical argument for American foreign policy and the reasons for its success during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." Samuel Flagg Bemis, 'Within Our Own Power', *New York Times*, June 10, 1951. For a further discussion of the impact of realism upon the historiography of American diplomatic history see Jerald A. Combs, 'Norman Graebner and the Realist view of American Diplomatic History', *Diplomatic History*, Vol.11, No.3, Summer 1987, pp.251-264. I examine the issue with particular reference to the period of the War of Independence in my *Power Politics or the*

realism upon policy-makers is, however, much less clear. One can see the realist message that international politics is fundamentally conflictual filtering through to Washington but not the equally important component of prudence and an understanding of the limits to power. Stanley Hoffmann has captured this very nicely:

"Something strange happened to Morgenthau's realism on the way to Washington: there the celebration of power blended with, instead of replacing, the old American idealism and crusading spirit. Those in Washington who read Morgenthau used his concept of the national interest to justify a definition of America's interests that was practically limitless and made compromise difficult."¹⁴⁴

Fundamentally the Realist Jeremiad, with its emphasis upon the tragedy of political life and its scepticism about the prospects for human progress, was too alien to take root in the American context as we shall also see in chapter four when we examine Morgenthau's opposition to the Vietnam War. We will also explore one of the most surprising and least well-known elements of the Morgenthau story: how Morgenthau, realist and arch-sceptic, came, at least in part, to respond to a sense of American exceptionalism himself!

Idealism of a New Diplomacy ? (unpublished Master of Arts dissertation, University of Keele, 1993.)

¹⁴⁴ Hoffmann, 'Realism and its Discontents', p.134. John Foster Dulles provides an example, in an especially obnoxious form, of this phenomenon in action.

Chapter Four: Vietnam and the Purpose of American Politics

"The purposes of our politics from the very beginning have been unique and revolutionary" (Hans Morgenthau).

"Put not your trust in Princes" (Walter Lippmann quoting Psalm 46, Verse 2)

To say that "the purposes of our politics from the very beginning have been unique and revolutionary" seems an astonishing statement for a political realist to make but Morgenthau used precisely this phrase on too many occasions over the course of the 1950s and 1960s for us to be able to dismiss it as an aberration.¹ It was, indeed, an extraordinary period in Morgenthau's intellectual life in which he came to believe that there was, after all, something exceptional in the American polity, past and present, which held it apart from other nations.

The Purpose of American Politics

There are signs through much of the 1950s that Morgenthau, in the light of a more thoroughgoing contemplation of American history and politics, was coming around to the notion of an exceptional America. In part, as has already been suggested, this reflected the success of Morgenthau's move from Old World to New as displayed in his *In Defense of the National Interest* where, for the first time, he uses the collective pronoun 'we' with reference to American affairs. In the works from the early 1950s his support for American exceptionalism rests uneasily in a context in which he is

¹ See his *Dilemmas of Politics*, p.216; 'The Decline of American Government', *New Republic*, December 16th, 1957, p.10; 'Goldwater - The Romantic Regression', p.66.

generally critical of the notion. For example, in the scathing critique of Frank Tannenbaum's exceptionalism which we considered in the preceding chapter he nonetheless accepted that the pluralism of the domestic government of the United States, which enabled interests to be reconciled through mostly non-violent means, made for a qualitatively different kind of approach to foreign affairs:

"The morality of pluralism allows the United States, once it is secure in that minimum of vital interests to which we have referred above, to transfer those principles of political morality to the international scene and to deal with divergent interests there with the same methods of genuine compromise and conciliation which are a permanent element of its domestic political life."²

This amounts at the very least to a pronounced change in tone from his early post-war works where the emphasis was very much upon warning the United States against the illusion that its behaviour was, or indeed could be, very different from other nations in the necessarily conflictual arena of international politics. At times the tension between the opposing understandings of American exceptionalism was evident from page to page. In another article from the early 1950s he accepted the exceptionalist argument that the growth of the United States had been marked by "...a continental expansion which created the freest and richest nation on earth without conquest or subjugation of others" before going on to emphasise, on the very next page, that it was only the "numerical inferiority of the Indian opponent" which obscured the element of power which was "...no more absent from the continental expansion of the United States than the expansionist movements of other nations."³

One can find this tension in much of Morgenthau's writing of the 1950s but it is with the publication of *The Purpose of American Politics* in 1960 that the

² 'Another Great Debate', p.985.

³ 'The Mainsprings of American Foreign Policy: The National Interest Vs Moral Abstractions', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. XLIV, No.4, December 1950, pp.836-837.

exceptionalist tenor reaches its most fervent pitch. This book is quite unlike any other in Morgenthau's opus and it should be required reading in International Relations for all those with a one dimensional appreciation of Morgenthau as a thinker.

In the first hundred pages or so Morgenthau is more sympathetic to American exceptionalism than anywhere else in his writing and his prose assumes, at times, what might even be described as a romantic hue. "America", Morgenthau announces, "has become the Rome and Athens of the Western World, the foundation of its lawful order and the fountainhead of its culture."⁴ Given that "in order to be worthy of... lasting sympathy a nation must pursue its interests for the sake of a transcendent purpose that gives meaning to the day-to-day operations of its foreign policy" it was the American purpose to defend Western civilisation against the threat of "a universal creed that knows no national boundaries and possesses the means of universal destruction."⁵ In meeting the Soviet threat the United States would also be fulfilling another of the components of its national purpose: the expansion of the area of equality in freedom. Hence "the American purpose carries within a meaning that transcends the national boundaries of America and addresses itself to all the nations of the world."⁶ Frank Tannenbaum could not have made the point any more clearly.

Along with the newly discovered appreciation of the American purpose came a suddenly dewey-eyed reading of American history beginning with the American Revolution itself which, indeed, has been the only true revolution "...because it is the only one in which men as creatures of history rationally chose to become its creators, to start history afresh by ridding themselves of its burdens and heeding its lessons, to give their nation

⁴ Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics*, p.5.

⁵ *ibid.* pp. 5,8.

⁶ *ibid.* p.34.

a novel purpose..."⁷ The sense of mission which the pilgrims had brought with them from England was able to flourish in an American context defined by "the equalitarian conditions of society and the absence of serious competition from abroad." This gave rise to a "vertical and horizontal mobility" which had, uniquely, enabled the pursuit of equality in freedom to become a part of the American purpose.⁸

It hardly needs to be added how different this is from Morgenthau's earlier readings of the course of American history. Gone are the images of the Founding Fathers as cautious practitioners of *realpolitik* only too fearful of what 'equality in freedom' may mean for the survival of republican virtues. Also missing are the victims of 'horizontal mobility': the formerly numerous tribes of Native Americans. 'Vertical mobility' also excluded, of course, all those whose skin colour happened to be black and, indeed, the residual contradiction of slavery also appears to be absent from this new account. He downplays the Civil War with the rather astonishing rationalisation that "both the North and the South saw the purpose of America in the preservation and expansion of their respective kinds of freedom."(!!)⁹ The Morgenthau of another period may well have responded to this kind of claim with the observation that tyrannies of many hues have claimed to be defending the realm of freedom.

After this extraordinary beginning the tone of the argument does change somewhat as Morgenthau begins to explore some of the historical obstacles which have been placed in the path of the American purpose. At home vertical mobility required horizontal mobility to sustain it and the former was threatened by the closure of the territorial 'frontier' in the late nineteenth century, in combination with the emergence of highly

⁷ *ibid.* p.30. In contrast the English Revolution of the seventeenth century and the French Revolution were no more than "attempts at restoring an ancient order of things, an ancient "constitution" which the powers-that-be were despoiling."

⁸ Morgenthau, *The Purpose of American Politics* . pp.13-22.

⁹ *ibid.* p.38.

concentrated blocs of economic power - a phenomenon accentuated by the economic crisis of the Great Depression. The solution emerged in the form of what others have called the 'countervailing' power of the expanded Federal Government under Franklin Roosevelt. This was, to be sure, nothing like a perfect resolution of the problem. For one thing it challenged the "main tenet of the American political tradition", namely, that public power is the primary threat to individual freedom and equality. This demonstrated "for the first time in the American experience ... that it was impossible to escape the evil of power altogether. America, like all other nations and, for that matter, like all men, had to choose between two evils and inescapably it chose the evil of public power to restrain, control, compete with and destroy the evil of private power."¹⁰

If this sounds more like the Morgenthau of old it is still the case that his conclusions are remarkably sanguine. Though, at the very apex of American society, the remaining concentrations of economic power have given America "permanent political and economic masters", all Americans have yet "an approximately equal chance to rise to that mastery."¹¹ In general terms "wealth is the democratic principle of social distinction par excellence" because "anybody can acquire it."¹² In sum, "America emerged victorious from its first great crisis."¹³

Events external to the United States had also challenged the American purpose in an even more fundamental way and it is in exploring these that the tensions between Morgenthau's earlier positions and current empathy with exceptionalism become most explicit and problematic. He rejects the possibility that the American purpose had been betrayed from within in the rush for empire marked by the annexation of Hawaii, the Philippines, Puerto

¹⁰ *ibid.* pp.80-81.

¹¹ *ibid.* p.86.

¹² *ibid.* p.45.

¹³ *ibid.* p.82.

Rico and the establishment of the Cuban protectorate. For the first time he now felt able to agree that this had been nothing more than an 'aberration', an "historic incident that had no organic connection with the purpose and interests of America."¹⁴ A few pages later he conceded that "the idea of the American mission ... is certainly a political ideology, a rationalization and justification of policies that were undertaken for other and primarily selfish reasons." Nevertheless "...the idea expresses also a serious commitment to a purpose that is merely the American purpose projected beyond the territorial limits of America and circumscribed only by the reach of American influence."¹⁵

There had, of course, been problems when American purpose clashed with recalcitrant political realities. By avoiding the contamination of the American purpose with power politics Woodrow Wilson had instead found himself labouring with "...the impotence of a universal formula of salvation, armed with nothing but its own inner rationality..."¹⁶ Morgenthau's criticism of Wilson was nothing new in terms of past works but Wilson's failure now assumes a heroic status that was merely foolishness and shortsightedness previously. "There is", Morgenthau suggests, "no gainsaying the grandeur and nobility of the Wilsonian conception of the American purpose..."¹⁷ Later in the book he describes Wilson as one of the "great revitalizers" of the past.¹⁸ There are other, subtle, differences with his earlier historical accounts. While he continued to believe that American intervention in Europe was primarily to respond to the threat to the European balance of power, he now saw an element of the American purpose as well. In the "extirpation of evil" as he

¹⁴ *ibid.* p.96.

¹⁵ *ibid.* pp.100-101.

¹⁶ *ibid.* p.108.

¹⁷ *ibid.* p.109.

¹⁸ *ibid.* p.295.

described the German defeat, "the American purpose had proved its vitality."¹⁹

In the second half of the book, Morgenthau turns to the problems faced by the American purpose at home and abroad and in some senses this finds us back in much more familiar territory in terms of the major themes of his work. He is critical of the fact that power and purpose have become separated in the 1950s with the calls of Dulles and others for the liberation or 'roll-back' of Communist areas being made to look ridiculous when it became apparent, as with Hungary in 1956, that no such action was possible. Even so, and without offering any tangible suggestions, he appears to feel that more could have been done. "The United States", he claims, "failed utterly to relate the American purpose of extending the area of freedom to the political situations with regard to which it was called upon to act."²⁰ In so far as I am aware - and as vaguely as he puts it - this was the only occasion where Morgenthau actually called for a greater American effort to extend 'the area of freedom' instead of urging the United States to display more prudence in its dealings with the Soviet Union.

Elsewhere, Morgenthau points to the problems which modernity presents for the realisation of the America purpose. As ever, he is troubled by modern technology, especially nuclear weapons, and he re-iterates that America's global influence "must serve the interests not only of the nation but also of mankind; for it must build the foundations for a supranational order that will take the control of nuclear weapons out of the hands of the nation state."²¹

¹⁹ *ibid.* p.126.

²⁰ *ibid.* p.193. This was important because "the living presence of [America's] achievements carried the promise of further achievements to the world, and the hope of the world carried that message back to America." This is, again, an extremely un-Morgenthau like statement.

²¹ *ibid.* p.310. In the most romantic vein imaginable the passage continues: "Thus it will be as it was at the beginning: what America does for itself it also does for mankind, and political experimentation on a world-wide scale in order to save mankind will be in direct line of succession to the political experiment at which its inception America offered itself to the world."

There is also a long section devoted to the decline of the public sphere and the 'new feudalism' of interest group pluralism that he felt to be undermining both the power of government and the links of the populace to its governing elite. Even here, however, and more so than at any other point in his life, Morgenthau hoped that the daemonic element of charisma in the form of revitalised leadership, could help to re-establish the link between president and people and, in general, to overcome the problems of modernity.²² If both *virtu* and *fortuna* would determine whether America would be able to fulfil its purpose, Morgenthau emphasised that the former rested upon "the quality of our wills and minds" and that this was "in our own hands."²³

How, then, are we to account for this extraordinary work which is so dramatically different from all his other books? This was undoubtedly the period in which Morgenthau responded most keenly to a sense of American nationalism and that is clearly present in *The Purpose of American Politics*. One can also see that Morgenthau, at least in part, had been influenced by the revisionist historiography of the 1950s which provided a reading of the American past emphasising harmony rather than conflict.²⁴ These two elements are hardly enough to account for the change in its entirety, though.

Alternatively, one could read *The Purpose of American Politics* as the product of a subtle rhetorical shift on Morgenthau's part in order to better phrase his message in the kind of language that an American audience would be more likely to respond to. As Charles Jones has put it "rhetoric consists in the persuasive use of language. Persuasion rests just as much in the choice of genre and the manner of publication as in the construction of arguments and the employment of types."²⁵ It may be possible to conclude on the basis of a

²² *ibid* pp. 397-398.

²³ *ibid.* p.323.

²⁴ He cites Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition* in his footnotes amongst other works similar in tone.

²⁵ See Jones, 'Carr: Ambivalent Realist', p.109.

'minimalist' reading of *The Purpose of American Politics* that Morgenthau's message is, in essence, the same. Aside from the markedly different reading of American history one could argue that many of his essential criticisms remain unchanged, for example, in the American failure to directly engage with the problems of power and the political; in the various difficulties thrown up by modernity and so on. "As long as the basic modes of address are articulated in the idiom of realism", as one writer has described the rhetoric of Henry Kissinger, "the speaker may also appeal for strategic purposes to democratic values, standards of justice, and other ideals without having to risk deferring to them."²⁶

On the other hand an author who has examined Morgenthau's rhetorical style in some detail has concluded that "...there is little evidence to show that he drew directly from rhetorical theory."²⁷ One certainly does not sense that Morgenthau is consciously manipulating his rhetoric in the way one does when reading almost anything of Henry Kissinger's. Moreover, a minimalist reading of *The Purpose of American Politics* remains unconvincing in the final analysis. There are too many important differences of substance as well as style.

Rather than as a general rhetorical device, could we instead see the book as aimed at the specific audience of the incoming Democratic administration and its dynamic young President John F. Kennedy? Felix Gilbert has described the panegyric as a form of "humanist political writing" which "...frequently served the purpose of propaganda; often they were commissioned, or sometimes they were written in the hope of gaining the favor of a ruler or a government."²⁸ Just as Machiavelli's *The Prince* was

²⁶ Robert Hariman, 'Henry Kissinger: Realism's Rational Actor', in Beer and Hariman (eds), *Post-Realism*, p.37.

²⁷ G. Thomas Goodnight, 'Hans J. Morgenthau in Defense of the National Interest: On Rhetoric, Realism and the Public Sphere', in Beer and Hariman (eds), *Post-Realism*, p.145.

²⁸ Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini: Politics and History in Sixteenth-Century Florence* (Princeton University Press, 1965).

written with the Medici family firmly in mind, was Morgenthau's book intended to catch the eye of the new Democrat President?²⁹

That Kennedy was aware of the book was absolutely clear. It became a regular feature of the Kennedy presidency that the details of the books he and the First Lady had been reading would be made known to the media. It was widely reported in various newspapers across the country that the book President-elect Kennedy had been reading, whilst on the way to visit the Vice-President to-be Lyndon Johnson, was *The Purpose of American Politics*.³⁰ A subsequent review of the book suggested that Morgenthau's remarks on the institution of the Presidency were "surprisingly close to the views expressed by President-elect Kennedy."³¹ A second review concluded that "the message of this book is intended, in fact, for the new President of the United States."³²

It is not possible to determine whether or not Morgenthau hoped that the new administration would make use of him in some capacity. Aside from an invitation to Kennedy's inauguration and dinner at the White House there is nothing in the *Morgenthau Papers* to confirm that Morgenthau was considered for any kind of position in Washington, nor can we know if he was actively interested in such a possibility.

What is clear is Morgenthau's growing disaffection with the Eisenhower Administration over the course of the 1950s. He had, in 1951, accepted Dean Acheson's invitation to join the Committee on Foreign Affairs to advise the Democratic National Committee. In his letter of acceptance to

²⁹ For Machiavelli's ringing exhortations to the Medici see *The Prince*, ed. and trans. R. Adams, (WW Norton, London, 1992) p.210.

³⁰ *Boston Globe*, November 17, 1960. All this extra publicity doesn't appear to have been translated into extra book sales. In a letter to Alfred A. Knopf, Morgenthau shares the former's disappointment at the reception of the book and asks whether in future promotions "could not something be made of the fact that ... Kennedy was reading the book on the plane trip to Johnson's ranch." Letter to Alfred A. Knopf, January 10, 1961, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 139.

³¹ Review by Ernest Lefever, *The Washington Post*, Sunday, December 4, 1960.

³² Review by C. Northcote-Parkinson, *The Saturday Review*, November 26, 1960. Also see the reviews by Charles Seeb in *The Sunday Star* (Washington D.C.), December 11, 1960; and by Robert E. Kennedy, *Chicago Sun Times*, January 15, 1960.

Acheson he stressed that he had set aside his usual non-partisanship because in present circumstances he could "...see no possibility of trying to improve the foreign policy of the United States through the instrumentality of the Republican Party" which was "intellectually sterile".³³ In print he objected most of all to what he saw as the lack of political awareness of Eisenhower's government. It had "acted in terms of a philosophy alien to politics" in the naive belief that good businessmen would also make good statesmen; that the values and praxis of the American boardroom could be successfully transferred to international politics.³⁴ In terms of Eisenhower specifically the "fatal weakness" of his approach to foreign policy was that it was "informed by the same philosophy of abstention, conciliation, and pacification" as his domestic policies.³⁵ Morgenthau was never, of course, likely to warm to the hectoring tones of John Foster Dulles nor to what he saw as Dulles' propensity "...to look at foreign policy with a lawyers eye and to manipulate it with a lawyers tools."³⁶

What probably troubled Morgenthau most about the Eisenhower Administration, as it did many other intellectual critics, was the sense that this was somehow an indolent and complacent government whose members would rather be on the golf course than attending to affairs of state.³⁷ From an intellectual's viewpoint they also seemed to embody the very worst elements of provincial, philistine, anti-intellectual America.

It is hardly surprising then that Morgenthau, like so many other Americans intellectual and otherwise, was initially captivated by the incoming Democratic Administration. The manifest energy of the new regime could be set against the apparent sloth of its predecessor. Moreover, the

³³ Letter to Dean Acheson, August 27, 1957, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 17.

³⁴ Morgenthau, *Dilemmas of Politics*, p.283.

³⁵ *ibid.* p.296.

³⁶ *ibid.* pp.299-301.

³⁷ Given the catastrophes of the following decade, created by men who delighted in meddling in every corner of the globe, many would look back somewhat nostalgically at Eisenhower's businessmen.

newcomers were so much younger, relatively speaking, not to mention better educated and altogether more interested in intellectual life and in what intellectuals may have to offer Washington. Or so it appeared. In reality the new President was not really any more intellectually inclined than his predecessor and successor; intellectuals may have been useful for the allure they added to his court at Camelot but his interest in them did not stretch beyond the instrumental. And as for his servants, 'The Best and the Brightest' they may have been but, as we shall see later in the chapter, they were sorely lacking in Aristotelian *phronesis* or Oakshottian practical wisdom or even, more simply, the kind of common sense that could have helped them to avoid the disaster in Vietnam.

For the moment, however, their star shone brightly and Morgenthau was influenced by it too. More, I think, than any other factor it was the inspiration of the new wave of Democratic leadership that made *The Purpose of American Politics* so unlike all of Morgenthau's other books. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Morgenthau never became an uncritical devotee of Kennedy as so many other intellectuals did, Arthur Schlesinger Jr for one. At no time did he cease to 'speak truth to power' and by the time of Kennedy's death he had been critical in a number of ways of the Kennedy Administration.³⁸ He had for a time, though, seen in Kennedy the kind of charismatic leadership capable of restoring America's "sense of mission".³⁹

The Kennedy Presidency coincided with a period in which Morgenthau's own sense of American identity appears to have been at its strongest and where, relatively speaking, his general outlook appears to have been at its most hopeful. All this, of course, came to be shattered by the impact of the Vietnam War and Morgenthau's rise to prominence as one of the war's most public opponents. Before we explore this critical period in his life,

³⁸ 'On Kennedy's Death', *New York Review of Books*, December 26, 1963; 'The Trouble with Kennedy', *Commentary*, 1962, pp.51-54.

³⁹ 'The Decline of American Government', p.11.

however, we do need to see how it is that he came to oppose the American intervention in Vietnam and this will require some backtracking so that we can observe the evolution of his position on the course of American foreign policy as the Cold War unfolded.

Reading the Cold War

On the whole Morgenthau's record of judgement is a good one, if one keeps in mind a couple of important caveats. Given that one of Morgenthau's most important functions was to provide commentary to popular journals on the twists and turns of the Cold War as they occurred, it is hardly surprising that errors and misjudgements were made along the way. There was undoubtedly an element of overreaction in his analysis of developments like the first Soviet atomic explosion and the Hungarian and Suez crises of 1956. His response to the latter events, for example, was a furious condemnation of American 'betrayal' of its allies in the Middle East and of the 'new pacifism' that he alleged to have given the Russians a free hand in Europe. Later on, when he had had the opportunity to contemplate the events in a more measured way, he was able to see that the Hungarian case was merely confirmation of a reality that had existed for some time: that the United States had recognised a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.⁴⁰ Similarly, his early prediction that the Cold War had to give way to negotiated settlement of war was modified once the initial sense of crisis had passed.⁴¹

The other substantial caveat is that, as with his basic theoretical explanations, when it came to assessing foreign policy he was torn between treating ideology as something serious in its own right or as merely the cloak for interest. Hence, there are numerous changes in emphasis over time as to

⁴⁰ On this point see Nobel, 'Morgenthau's Struggle with Power', p.72.

⁴¹ Morgenthau, *American Foreign Policy*, pp.139, 194-195.

whether Soviet ideology was an important factor in its own right or merely the camouflage for the Russian imperialism of old. At times this tension could manifest itself in the space of a few pages of the same work. For example, in his *In Defense of the National Interest* he describes the Soviet-American rivalry as a universal struggle between incompatible political philosophies before shortly afterwards stressing that communism was, in fact, merely a "tactical instrument of imperialist policies", "propaganda ... which justifies and rationalizes ... imperialistic moves and objectives in the universal terms of marxist dogma."⁴² This tended to lead to somewhat different policy recommendations: tougher and more direct when viewing the Soviet challenge in ideological terms and more restrained when seeing the Soviets as Russian imperialists writ large.

On the whole, though, Morgenthau's judgement stands up well to historical scrutiny. From the beginning he had urged a strong American involvement in the rebuilding of Western Europe and, though critical of the representation of the Truman Doctrine in universalistic moral terms, he welcomed the support for Greece and Turkey and the broader lifeline to Western Europe which was provided by the Marshall Plan in 1948.⁴³ He was also a committed supporter of the European Union. In a letter to George Kennan he emphasised that the success of the European Union was "in the vital interest of the United States" and could not be assured without American involvement.⁴⁴

When he turned his attention from Europe to Asia, however, his outlook was rather different. The United States shared with the countries of Western Europe a common religion and, indeed, civilisation in addition to powerful mutual interests which made American involvement there both

⁴² *American Foreign Policy*, pp.59-63, 78.

⁴³ For his criticism of the Truman Doctrine see *American Foreign Policy*, p.116.

⁴⁴ Letter to George Kennan, June 10, 1949, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 33. Morgenthau suggested that it could be presented to the American public as a 'United States of Europe'.

necessary and practical. In Europe, moreover, the United States would be dealing with firmly established nation-states of mostly long-standing with attendant institutional structures for the to work with. None of these things could be taken for granted in the Asian context.

One could argue that underestimating nationalism has been one of the most common errors made by intellectuals of a wide variety of hues over the past two hundred years but it was not a failing shared by Morgenthau. He consistently argued that what was taken in America to be a monolithic communist revolution sweeping across Asia and directed from Moscow was, in fact, a series of anti-colonial revolts reinforced by nationalism. This suggested to Morgenthau that, in time, explicit rivalries would be likely to develop between the communist nations themselves. As early as 1951 his *In Defense of the National Interest* suggested that the Chinese were not "stooges of the Kremlin" and that "the sharing of communist ideology cannot in the long run overshadow China's traditional fear of, and enmity to, Russia."⁴⁵ He also sensed that, in time, China could come to play an important role in the ending of bipolarity.⁴⁶ He warned that "the tide of Asiatic Revolution" could not be turned back by military force and was already, in 1951 and three years before the final humiliation at Dien Bien Phu, drawing the attention of his American readership to the French exertions in Indochina where, as with the Dutch in Indonesia, "the effort has been a drain on their resources out of all proportion to the objective to be gained, and regardless of the outcome has weakened rather than strengthened the over-all position of the countries concerned."⁴⁷

He also had a somewhat older historical analogy in mind; that of Metternich's doomed attempt to resist liberal forces in Europe and maintain the status quo of aristocratic rule. Morgenthau saw American attempts to oppose communism everywhere in precisely the same way: as a futile effort

⁴⁵ Morgenthau, *American Foreign Policy*, p.116.

⁴⁶ *ibid.* p.7.

⁴⁷ *ibid.* p.65.

to maintain the status quo against the ultimately irresistible changes taking place in Asia, the Americas, Africa and elsewhere. This was a thesis to which he stuck consistently and repeated time and again in his publications right through to the late 1970s. As he put it in 1975, "the champion of freedom became the defender of the colonial status quo. Making common cause with the colonial powers, it shared with them the moral taint of colonialism. Thus America came to lose the peculiar moral aura which it thought had set it apart from all other nations."⁴⁸ It should instead have been trying to work with the flow of change, moulding it in the direction of American interests where possible. Morgenthau was undoubtedly right in all of this. In supporting reactionary and often brutal regimes everywhere purely on the basis of their opposition to communism the United States did significant harm to its long-term interests in the Americas, Asia and elsewhere. In Asia the communist movements in China and Vietnam had initially hoped to cooperate with the United States. Instead, goaded by the delusion that it had 'lost' China, the United States manned the barricades in Korea and set a precedent which was to prove so ruinous over the next twenty years.

Vietnam

American hubris was, of course, to meet its nemesis in the jungles of Vietnam. The general historical outline and historiographical and counterfactual questions (would Kennedy have ended American involvement had he lived to see a second term of the Presidency?) concerning the American intervention are well known and I don't intend to repeat them here but we do need to explore Morgenthau's involvement.

Following from his general reading of Asian politics, Morgenthau had identified Vietnam as a potential quagmire for the United States long before

⁴⁸ 'The Decline of the West', *Partisan Review*, Vol.42,1975, p.512.

the country began to assume a central position in public affairs as American involvement deepened in the 1960s. His reservations, too, were essentially consistent over the course of twenty years. Even the State Department's Historical Office, in response to a request from the White House in mid-1965, found it necessary to report that "...he has been essentially consistent in his attitudes."⁴⁹

His reading of contemporary Asian politics seems to have been fortified by a trip he made through Asia in the latter part of 1955 and early 1956 which both confirmed many of his existing views and also made him aware of how different events appeared to the Asian nations themselves, when compared with the view from Washington. In an article for *The Chicago Sunday Times* written shortly after his return he confirmed that, amongst other things, there was "...more concern in Washington about the expansion of Communist China than there is in Hong Kong."⁵⁰ He was also strengthened in his belief that where revolutionary impulses existed in Asian countries they were fundamentally national and anti-colonial in hue rather than communist as such.

He had also visited Vietnam itself and obtained a personal meeting with President Diem which convinced him that Diem would not be able to establish a stable regime in South Vietnam. At the head of a government, most of whose leading members had fought with the French against their own people, Diem already faced a serious problem with his legitimacy which could only be heightened by his authoritarian methods and inability, or unwillingness, to cultivate a broader base of popular support. He claims to have warned Diem "to his evident displeasure" that by attempting to govern on a permanent basis through the use of "totalitarian means" he would inevitably alienate the governed and "be left with nothing but his family and a

⁴⁹ Memorandum to Chester Cooper from William J. Jordan, May 14, 1965, *Lyndon B. Johnson Papers*, Microform Reel 7, Adams Library, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

⁵⁰ *Chicago Sun Times*, February 15, 1966.

praetorian guard and that his people would see in Communism the only alternative to his regime."⁵¹ Morgenthau was able to witness at first-hand how unpopular the Diem regime was; a fact hardly known to American public opinion right until the coup which removed Diem from the government.

Upon his return to the United States he resigned his membership of the Committee for a Free Cuba because the committee also gave public displays of support for the Diem regime. He refused an invitation to join the American Friends of Vietnam because the organisation presented the conflict in Vietnam as "one between freedom and slavery, democracy and tyranny" when in fact the regime in the south was manifestly despotic.⁵² Though it appeared in his writing from time to time, Vietnam was not yet a dominant feature of the work he produced for public consumption. American involvement was, after all, largely limited to financial assistance and a relatively small number of advisers. Other more pressing events claimed the bulk of his attention.

It was not until 1961 that he delivered what amounted to a first, formal warning in his article *Asia: The American Algeria* which, in effect, updated the concerns he had expressed about American foreign policy in Asia some ten years earlier.⁵³ In a second article published in the same month on the general problems facing the new Kennedy Administration, he warned that Kennedy may soon have to face a choice in Vietnam between an escalation to war "in the defense of indefensible and at best non-essential positions" and a liquidation of the American commitment. He also cautioned that in South Vietnam "counter-guerrilla warfare, operating in hostile territory without a popular base, must fail."⁵⁴ Ten months later he published another warning which proved entirely prophetic:

⁵¹ Unpublished letter to *The New York Times*, August 30, 1963, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 43; *Vietnam and the United States* (Public Affairs Press, Washington D.C., 1965) p.29.

⁵² Letter to Angier Biddle Duke, Chairman, American Friends of Vietnam, March 15, 1956, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 1.

⁵³ 'Asia: The American Algeria', *Commentary*, Vol. 100, July 1961, pp.43-46.

⁵⁴ 'Failure and Challenge', *The New Leader*, July 3, 1961, pp.3-5.

"If the present primarily military approach is persisted in, we are likely to be drawn ever more deeply into a Korean-type war, fought under political and military conditions much more unfavourable than those that prevailed in Korea and in the world a decade ago. Such a war cannot be won quickly, if it can be won at all, and may well last ... five or ten years, perhaps only to end again in a stalemate, as did the Korean War. Aside from the military risks ... such a war would certainly have a profound effect upon the political health of the nation."⁵⁵

It is hard to imagine a more accurate foretelling of what did take place over the next ten years. It is worth keeping in mind, too, that at this time Vietnam had barely begun to impress itself upon the national consciousness. Newspaper opinion, such as it was, strongly supported American aid to the regime in South Vietnam and significant opposition had yet to appear in the Congress. In 1964, at a time when Morgenthau was already concluding that the situation in South Vietnam was "beyond redemption", Neil Sheehan and David Halberstam - well known dissenters from the second half of the 1960s - were still writing articles stressing the vital importance of Vietnam to the United States.⁵⁶ As late as March 1965 even the arrival of the first American combat troops hardly provoked a reaction in the Congress or in the media.⁵⁷ The precise story of how these men came to be committed to war in Vietnam is beyond the scope of this dissertation but I do think it important for us to take a generic look at the men responsible for the shaping and implementation of policy towards Vietnam.

⁵⁵ Morgenthau, *Vietnam and the United States*, p.36.

⁵⁶For Morgenthau's assessment see his letter to Luther Allen, Dept. of Government, University of Mass., *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 3, February 26, 1964. Sheehan and Halberstam's early support for the American presence in Vietnam is noted by Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (Faber and Faber, London, 1986) p.656.

⁵⁷ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (Pimlico, London, 1994 [2nd edition]) p.432.

The Best and the Brightest: or Vietnam as a Management Problem

'Vietnam as A Management Problem' was actually the title of a seminar held at Harvard University in 1956 and it was surely true that no conflict to date had witnessed so many manager-bureaucrats storming the front lines; no war had been studied so intensively as it was being fought. At one point during 1967 these warriors of the word were producing nearly a tonne of printed reports per day.⁵⁸ In a sense Vietnam represented the apogee of the American Science of Politics, the culmination of the intellectual developments of the preceding decades. Behavioralism had emphasised the separation of facts from values, of objectivity, and this epistemology was put to extensive use in Vietnam. Strategic analysis was informed by methods drawn from management and economics. It was axiomatic that such methods were universal in scope, equally worthwhile for running a major commercial enterprise, for theorising about nuclear war, for running a bureaucracy or for fighting a war against a guerrilla army.

It followed that the intellectual advice most valued in such circumstances was given by those who felt comfortable with complacent universalities. Samuel Huntington, that mono-lingual 'expert' in comparative politics recommended, without the slightest knowledge of Vietnam or its history, a programme of so-called 'forced-draft urbanization and modernization' which became the disastrous 'Strategic Hamlets' policy. Few troubled to acquaint themselves with the detail of the French debacle of the early 1950s, let alone with undertaking a more substantial study of Vietnam's history and politics. Daniel Ellsberg, for example, admitted that he had not read the history of the period from 1945 to 1954 until September 1969 after he

⁵⁸ This figure is drawn from Fred Inglis, *The Cruel Peace: Everyday Life and the Cold War* (Basic Books, 1991) p.224.

had turned against the war,⁵⁹ Asianists with a thorough knowledge of Vietnam and its history and the caution inherent in an awareness of the particular, were sidelined within and without the bureaucracy.

The men most influential in shaping Vietnam were widely admired for their brilliance, not least by themselves. McGeorge Bundy had been the Dean of the College at Harvard at 34; Walt Rostow the scholar with the sweeping - and unhistorical - blueprint for economic growth which would permit the 'take-off' of underdeveloped countries all over the globe; above all, Robert McNamara who had transformed the Ford Motor Company with his systems analysis and had left the Presidency of Ford to become the Secretary of Defense. He had an overwhelming belief in the efficacy of quantitative methods and had a dazzling array of statistics which he could quote from memory, all of which appeared to affirm how well the war was proceeding in Vietnam.⁶⁰ His chief civilian aide, also a confidant of McGeorge Bundy, was a former Harvard lawyer by the name of John McNaughton. McNaughton was an acquaintance of Thomas Schelling and he introduced many of Schelling's ideas into Vietnam strategy by adapting the coercive strategy of nuclear counterforce into a targeted programme of 'escalation' against North Vietnam.⁶¹ The problem, as Lawrence Freedman has put it, was that "scant consideration had been given in theories of strategic coercion to the problem of shoring up a rotten regime against a resolute opponent."⁶² None of the men seemed capable of the kind of empathetic identification which might have helped them to understand the mindset of a people struggling to emerge from

⁵⁹ John C. Donovan, *The Cold Warriors: A Policy-Making Elite* (DC Heath and Company, Lexington, 1974) p.168.

⁶⁰ During his first trip to Vietnam in 1962, after having spent more than a mere forty-eight hours in the country, he announced that "every qualitative measurement ... shows that we are winning the war." McNamara quoted in Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, p.271.

⁶¹ For fuller discussions of John McNaughton's influence see Kaplan, pp.329-336; Lawrence Freedman, 'Vietnam and the disillusioned strategist', *International Affairs*, Vol.72, No.1, 1996, pp.136-142; David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (Random House, New York, 1972) pp.361-369.

⁶² Freedman, 'Vietnam and the disillusioned strategist', p.143.

the shadow of colonial domination. Instead, they assumed that their Vietnamese opponents shared their own peculiar kind of rationality which proved to be a tragic mistake.⁶³

The 'Best and the Brightest' had a number of other flaws to add to their hyperrationality. Though they prided themselves on their hard-minded approach to the world, their lack of sentimentality and their realism, it was a peculiarly American kind of realism. Absent was any sense of prudence, of the diabolical nature of the political and the realist's awareness that *fortuna* often finds ways of thwarting the rational designs of men. Instead this American *realpolitik* was combined with a kind of muscular, problem-solving, can do-ism which was strengthened by the overweening confidence of the men themselves who, after all, had experienced little but success in their own lives.

The other missing component was any sense that the exercise of power was morally hazardous. Utterly convinced of their own virtue, and that of America's in the world, they failed to subject the means of American actions in Vietnam to substantive ethical questioning, convinced of the righteousness of the ends. Even when men like Bundy and McNamara left the government it was fundamentally because they had begun to doubt the future success of the war rather than its ethical wrongs. Giving American tactics scientific sounding names also helped to cloud the ethical problems. 'Strategic Hamlets' seemed to add an aura of rectitude to a sometimes explicitly violent process of human dislocation which had also featured in the *modus operandi* of the Japanese in China earlier in the century. At its worst, as in the so-called 'body count', the dehumanising language was hardly different from that employed by the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century.

⁶³ One of the most comic examples of this was Lyndon Johnson attempting to buy off Ho Chi Minh with programmes of economic aid as though he were horsetrading with, say, the junior senator from Alabama.

For Morgenthau the 'body count' was the ultimate symbol of an American approach that had placed quantitative measurement above qualitative judgement.⁶⁴ For a time Morgenthau, like so many others, had been impressed by the men brought to office by Kennedy. He felt that the Defense Department had been "transformed by a group of young intellectuals" and that it was one of Kennedy's historical legacies "to have made the intellectual respectable as a manager of public affairs."⁶⁵ Not long after making these remarks he found himself publicly opposing these same men over their handling of Vietnam.

By the middle of the 1960s Vietnam was very much at the centre of Morgenthau's attention and he was becoming ever more active in the public sphere. His critique was entirely consistent with his earlier observations on American policy in Asia. The United States, Morgenthau suggested, was continuing to operate according to the mind-set of Containment in Europe in 1947 rather than adapting to the very different circumstances of Asia in the mid 1960s.⁶⁶ It was clearly no longer plausible to equate Vietnamese national communism with Chinese or Soviet power and, in fact, the American presence was actually serving to prevent Vietnam and China from resuming their traditionally antagonistic stances towards each other.⁶⁷ American tactics were just as flawed as their broader reading of the geo-politics of the region. Given the experiences of World War Two and Korea it seemed clear to Morgenthau that the United States was expecting far too much to come from the bombing campaign against the North.⁶⁸ And the whole 'pacification' programme in the South was based on the fundamental misconception that

⁶⁴ 'The Intellectual, Political, and Moral Roots of U.S. Failure in Vietnam', in William D. Coplin and Charles W. Kegley Jr (eds), *Analyzing International Relations* (Prager Publishers, New York, 1975) p.118.

⁶⁵ Morgenthau, 'Significance in History', *The New Leader*, December 9, 1963, p.4.

⁶⁶ Morgenthau, 'U.S. Misadventure in Vietnam', *Current History*, Vol.54, No. 317, January, 1968, p.30.

⁶⁷ *ibid.* p.34; 'Johnson's Dilemma; The Alternatives Now in Vietnam', *New Republic*, May 28, 1966, p.14; 'What are U.S. Interests in Vietnam', *War/Peace Report*, December 1961, p.6.

⁶⁸ 'Johnson's Dilemma', p.13.

the guerrillas were an alien element who could somehow be separated from the local population.⁶⁹

The means being employed in Vietnam would require serious ethical evaluation at any time, Morgenthau thought, but given the manifestly spurious ends they were indefensible. The nation was being tarred with "incalculable moral damage."⁷⁰ In broader terms it represented the betrayal of the American mission in the world. America's war in Vietnam "...violates the very principles upon which the nation was founded and for which it has stood both in the eyes of its own citizens and of the world. It is an antirevolutionary war fought by a revolutionary nation. It is Metternich's war fought by the nation of Jefferson and Lincoln."⁷¹

The Politics of Dissent

As Morgenthau's dissent from government policy became more prominent he began to attract the ire of the White House. It was not, of course, the first time since the end of World War Two that action had been taken against dissenters and against intellectual freedoms in general. This is commonly thought to have begun with the McCarthy purge but, in fact, earlier roots can be found in the executive order issued by Harry Truman some ten days after the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine in which the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was ordered to investigate the 'loyalty' of all current and prospective federal employees. These so-called 'loyalty tests' were swiftly adopted in many other areas of American society.⁷²

⁶⁹ Morgenthau, 'U.S Misadventure in Vietnam', p.31.

⁷⁰ *ibid.* p.33.

⁷¹ 'What Ails America', *The New Republic*, October 28, 1967, p.18-19.

⁷² Pells, *The Liberal Mind*, pp.266-267. In the mid-50s Morgenthau wrote an article which was scathing in its criticism of the damage the loyalty-security measures had inflicted upon the State Department. 'The Impact of the Loyalty-Security Measures on the State Department', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. XI, No. 4, April 1955, pp.134-140.

Even so, it is true that the McCarthy inquisition was especially harmful. In the period from 1953 to 1955 nearly three hundred 'resignations' took place from the State Department.⁷³ Six hundred public school teachers and university lecturers were dismissed on the basis of their openly-held or suspected political views.⁷⁴ Champions of civil liberties and academic freedoms were placed on the defensive everywhere. Children were encouraged to report their 'subversive' parents just as they had been in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.⁷⁵ Books which had been consigned to the flames in Nazi Germany were proscribed for a second time. Thoreau's essay on civil obedience was banned simultaneously in the United States and China!⁷⁶ In passing we should, nevertheless, keep in mind that even at their worst the restrictions in the United States never amounted to more than a pale imitation of those prevailing in the totalitarian countries. American dissidents were not disappearing into concentration camps and mental asylums like some of their counterparts in the eastern bloc. Even so, one can see how some understandably sensitive European exiles could see a nascent American fascism in the McCarthyist purges and choose to return to Western Europe. Tensions had eased somewhat in the latter half of the 1950s and early 1960s but as the Johnson Administration came under increasing pressure over Vietnam it began to take action against its critics.

Morgenthau claimed that he first came to Johnson's attention as a consequence of a speech given in the United Nations by the Soviet Ambassador in which he quoted from Morgenthau's article *We Are Deluding Ourselves in Vietnam* which had been published in the New York Times Magazine in April 1965. Johnson's initial response was to order Robert McNamara to end Morgenthau's consultancy with the Pentagon. He also

⁷³ Inglis, *The Cruel Peace*, p.125.

⁷⁴ Pells, *The Liberal Mind*, p.266. Raymond Aron's claim that few careers were damaged in the United States is plainly wrong. See Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, p.212.

⁷⁵ Inglis, *The Cruel Peace*, p.190.

⁷⁶ Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper*, pp.193-194.

established a 'Project Morgenthau' desk at the White House where a junior staffer was given the job of looking for material from Morgenthau's publications with which to discredit him. On a more sinister note the FBI and the Internal Revenue Service were ordered to probe into his affairs.⁷⁷ These weapons at the disposal of the White House were, of course, nothing like those available to the Kremlin but they were unpleasant enough in the American context.⁷⁸

Pressure also came from other sources. The war still had plenty of vocal supporters in the media and of these none was louder than Joseph Alsop. As Captain Joseph Alsop he had served in the Far East during the Second World War and had become embittered at what he saw as the American failure to properly support Chiang Kai-Chek in the struggle with the communists which followed the withdrawal of the Japanese from China. Upon returning to the United States he wrote a series of three articles for the Washington Post entitled "Why we lost China". This was quickly taken up by the Republican Party and used for partisan purposes against the Democrats and targets in the State Department. This, in turn, provided material for the later exploitation of Joseph McCarthy.⁷⁹

In the mid-1960s Alsop was a forceful advocate of an American military presence in Asia generally and in Vietnam particularly, a position he

⁷⁷ See Morgenthau's letter to Ernest Lefever, The Brookings Institution, June 26, 1969, *The Morgenthau Papers*, Box 35. Both of these agencies had, of course, been used by Presidents against their political opponents in the past, beginning with Franklin Roosevelt.

⁷⁸ There is nothing in the *Morgenthau Papers* to indicate that government agencies found anything with which to damage him. As was mentioned earlier, government analysis in 1965 affirmed the consistency of his Vietnam critique, though his articles and speeches continued to be monitored. A memo sent to Walt Rostow in 1968 described the contents of a paper Morgenthau gave at the 1968 American Political Science Association Conference:

"Morgenthau's criticism about the transferability of western institutions cuts the ground out of our pointing with pride to the South Vietnam elections... It is a grimly pessimistic argument that denies the possibility of cultural change and, hence, the hope of "Vietnamizing" the war while Westernizing the society."

Memorandum from Fred Panzer to Walt Rostow, September 14, 1968, *Lyndon B. Johnson Papers*, Microform Reel 5. In the context Morgenthau's assessment of the clumsy American efforts at social engineering was simply accurate rather than pessimistic.

⁷⁹ Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, pp.112-115.

pushed through the medium of his column in the Washington Post and other syndicated newspapers. He subscribed to virtually all of the ill-thought verities of the day - domino theory, the Munich analogy - and he was quick to challenge any dissenters. Morgenthau had come to his attention in 1965 and Alsop had attempted, in his typically crude way, to label Morgenthau as an 'appeaser' in the same way that Geoffrey Dewson of the London Times had allegedly been an 'appeaser' in England until 1939.⁸⁰ In a reply Morgenthau couldn't hide his exasperation at having to defend himself against such a patently absurd historical analogy:

"I cannot be expected to explain to a literate public that Mao Tse-Tung is not Hitler, that the position of China in Asia is not like that of Nazi Germany in Europe, that Vietnam is not Czechoslovakia, that my opposition to our involvement in Vietnam is not identical with that of the appeasers of 1938. Anyone who believes that these disparate situations and issues are identical is beyond the reach of rational argument."⁸¹

He also intimated that Alsop was little more than a propagandist for the government which was, in essence, an accurate assessment.⁸² Notwithstanding its crudity, Alsop's attack had some unpleasant consequences:

"The effect of the Alsop column has been striking and distressing. Before its publication, my mail was overwhelmingly favorable and even the dissenting voices were respectful and polite. Now the gates of the political underworld seem to have been opened. I receive every day letters with xenophobic, red-

⁸⁰ Joseph Alsop, 'Pompous Ignorance', *Washington Post*, April 21, 1965.

⁸¹ Morgenthau, 'A Communication', *Washington Post*, April 30, 1965. The dispute with Alsop rumbled on through a number of Alsop articles and replies by Morgenthau, copies of which can be found in Box One of the *Morgenthau Papers*. Morgenthau was so angered by Alsop that he enquired into the possibility of suing him for defamation but the legal advice was against his proceeding.

⁸² In the same article in which he attacked Morgenthau, Alsop referred to the "marked success of President Johnson's Vietnamese policy" and observed that "he and his policy makers have been calling the shots with quite unprecedented accuracy." (!!)

baiting and anti-semitic attacks, not to speak of anonymous telephone calls at all hours of the day and night."⁸³

A number of the letters have been retained in the *Morgenthau Papers* and they are, indeed, full of the most obscene bile.⁸⁴

Aside from Alsop, Morgenthau also clashed publicly with Freedom House and, in particular, its chairman Leo Cherne. In November 1967 Freedom House had placed an advertisement in the *New York Times* with the headline, "Leaders warn that extremists could delay Vietnam negotiations." The statement continued: "A Crucial Turning Point! A Freedom House statement signed by 145 distinguished Americans urges the responsible critics of the Vietnam War to dissociate themselves from wild charges being made against the nation and its leaders." The so-called 'responsible' critics were warned that the failure "to draw the line between their positions and the views expressed by irresponsible extremists could encourage our Communist adversaries to postpone serious negotiations, raising the cost in lives and delaying the peace we earnestly seek."⁸⁵

In an article written as a reply, Morgenthau pointed to the irony of an organisation calling itself Freedom House seeking to suppress dissent. He also observed that behind the Iron Curtain "the governments of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, with the exception of East Germany, all make a distinction between "responsible" and "irresponsible" criticism and "irresponsible" criticism is defined as that which attacks the foundations of government policies." He likened the Freedom House document to the 'Intellectuals Manifesto' presented in Germany in 1914 by men who, similarly,

⁸³ Letter to Walter Lippmann, May 6, 1965, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 36.

⁸⁴ See the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 94. One cannot help but notice that a disproportionate number came from the 'Deep South'. Morgenthau was later to observe that "it is not accidental that many congressional advocates of violent repression in Vietnam represent states whose societies could not exist without the violent oppression of large masses, sometimes the majority of their populations." 'What Ails America', p.21.

⁸⁵ Quoted by Morgenthau in his 'Freedom, Freedom House and Vietnam', *The New Leader*, January 2, 1967, p.17.

thought their nation could do no wrong. Both were informed by a misguided patriotism which "deems it its duty to support the policies of the government in times of crisis, thus identifying the government with the nation, and in the process sacrifices the interests of the nation upon the altar of conformity."⁸⁶

The prominence of Morgenthau's dissent also brought him some professional difficulties. At some point during the 1960s (precisely when was not clear from the material in the *Morgenthau Papers*) Morgenthau accepted a Senior Fellowship in the Council on Foreign Relations in order to produce an updated statement of his views on international politics and ascertain whether or not he accepted that there had been substantial changes in the international system since the late 1940s. By the time he came to take up the position Vietnam had leapt into the public eye, as had Morgenthau's opposition to the war which had been viewed uneasily by some of the senior members of the council. Tensions appear to have reached a head over Morgenthau's wish to fly to Norway to address a Norwegian Students Association 'teach-in' on Vietnam. In the *Morgenthau Papers* there is a copy of a letter from council President Grayson Kirk to the association informing them that he had asked Morgenthau to let them know that he would not be attending after all.⁸⁷ A second letter from a Vice-President to Morgenthau refers to the 'accepted amenities' of the Council (presumably relating to public debates about foreign policy) and expresses the view that "...these are violated when an American citizen at a time when we are at war - whether declared or not - attacks the policies of the United States before a foreign audience."⁸⁸ The

⁸⁶ *ibid* pp.18-19. This clash, too, rumbled on for some time. See Leo Cherne's reply, 'Responsibility and the Critic', *The New Leader*, January 16, 1967, pp.9-13, and Morgenthau's further response, 'The House that Cherne Built', *The New Leader*, January 30, 1967, pp.17-18. Also see the letters to the editor from Freedom House of February 1st and from Morgenthau of February 3rd. Here again Morgenthau instituted libel proceedings after Freedom House circulated a copy of Cherne's attack to all those on its mailing list.

⁸⁷ Letter from Grayson Kirk, President, Council on Foreign Relations to Nils Gleditsch, President of the Norwegian Students' Association, January 20, 1966, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 41.

⁸⁸ Letter from Frank Aitschul, April 7, 1966, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 14.

Council later reversed its decision not to allow Morgenthau to attend but the incident appears to have left a bitter taste in his mouth. He came to believe that the original invitation from the Council had actually been made with a view to muzzling him.⁸⁹

There are also indications in the *Morgenthau Papers* that not all was well at the University of Chicago. Morgenthau's was one of five names of faculty to appear on a statement of 'Academic Freedom, Autonomy and Protest', which was sent around the university. The first three of five paragraphs are devoted to affirming 'the constitutional principles of university of life' which, naturally enough, revolve around freedom of expression. The concluding paragraphs are reproduced in full below:

"Any efforts by governments or private organizations outside the university to restrict this internal freedom by legislative or administrative action or by the threat of physical coercion are contrary to this principle. Equally contrary to this principle are efforts by members of the university to use similar coercive means to restrict this internal freedom of departments, divisions and schools of the university to govern themselves in matters of instruction, research, service and recruitment. (NP) The principles of the freedom of expression and manifestation of opinions and of academic freedom and autonomy can co-exist with each other as long as debate is reasoned and disagreement peaceful. The practice of coercion, either by outside bodies, public or private, or by one group of members of the university against other members of the university, is alien to the spirit and constitution of a free university."⁹⁰

⁸⁹ He was assured in a letter written over a decade later that this had not been the case. Letter from William Diebold Jr, Senior Research Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations, April 24, 1978, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 15.

⁹⁰ 'Statement of Academic Freedom, Autonomy and Protest', Fred Eggan, Gwin J. Kolb, C.W. Mackaver, Hans J. Morgenthau, Edward Shils, issued by the University of Chicago, Office of the Secretary of the Faculties, November 2, 1967.

One can only assume that this reflected various ructions in Chicago. Another hint is provided in a letter Morgenthau received from the Chairman of the Department of Political Science at the City University of New York to which Morgenthau eventually moved in 1968. Thomas Karis writes that "you could look forward to the warmest possible reception from a harmonious department. Also you can be confident that you will find at City College an atmosphere that will be not only personally congenial but also one of intellectual freedom and respect for independent thought."⁹¹ Morgenthau must have intimated that he was having problems in Chicago.

All this combines to suggest that Morgenthau was placed under a great deal of strain as a consequence of his opposition to the government. This pressure was augmented in 1969 by the painful irony of his son, Matthew, being drafted into the army. Hannah Arendt's assurance that "...only one in ten of those we send there ever sees combat duty" was small consolation.⁹² To make matters worse, Matthew appears to have been victimised while in the army because of his father's activities.⁹³

It would, however, be wrong to imply that his was a lone struggle. To be sure, few shared his foresight of the damage which was to be inflicted by the American intervention in Vietnam but by the mid-1960s others were beginning to join him in opposition. The media had, in general, begun to turn against the war by late 1967 but many key figures had done so some time earlier. Walter Lippmann had always been a sceptic and by the middle of 1965 he was writing about little else apart from Vietnam.⁹⁴ In the Congress, senators like Frank Church, Wayne Morse, and William Fulbright had burned their bridges with the Johnson Administration and were becoming ever more

⁹¹ Letter from Thomas Karis, Chairman, Department of Political Science, The City College of the City University of New York, April 19, 1967, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 64.

⁹² Letter from Hannah Arendt, June 18, 1969, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 5.

⁹³ See Morgenthau's letter to Senator Charles H. Percy, June 11, 1969, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 45.

⁹⁴ Steel, *Walter Lippmann*, p.576.

vocal opponents.⁹⁵ Morgenthau was in regular contact with both Morse and Fulbright and he was invited to testify before a number of congressional hearings in the late 1960s.⁹⁶

The campuses were becoming focal points for the anti-war movement and student leaders, Robert McNamara's son among them, were attaining a more prominent media profile. Morgenthau spoke at a number of the teach-ins in the United States and abroad and, in general, gave his full support to the student movement. As with Walter Lippmann, this extended to approving the various forms of civil disobedience, from street demonstrations to draft-dodging. In this, Morgenthau demonstrated how different he was to an authentic conservative like George Kennan. Kennan shared Morgenthau's antipathy towards the war but, if anything, he appeared to find the student protesters even more distasteful. Kennan warned that he had "...seen more harm done in this world by those who tried to storm the bastions of society in the name of utopian beliefs..." before going on to oppose almost every manifestation of student opposition.⁹⁷ Where Kennan and Morgenthau were agreed was that student unease was to do with much more than Vietnam alone. Morgenthau linked the student revolt to a much broader 'disenchantment' with a 'mechanized and bureaucratized' world, a "...world thoroughly secularized and dedicated to the production of consumer goods and weapons of mass destruction, [which] has lost its meaning..."⁹⁸

Morgenthau was joined by a wide variety of other intellectuals in his opposition to the war; sociologists like Barrington Moore, historians like Martin Duberman, scientists, poets, novelists, even a linguist in the form of

⁹⁵ Fulbright was also a vocal opponent of the universities and of social scientists "who ought to be acting as responsible and independent critics of the Government's policies." Fulbright quoted in Noam Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins* (Pantheon Books, New York, 1967) p.24.

⁹⁶ Some years later, Morgenthau suggested to Fulbright that "you remind me of a Roman Senator in the last days of the Republic, doing his duty while knowing full well that it will be in vain." Letter, May 29, 1974, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 22.

⁹⁷ George Kennan, *Democracy and the Student Left* (Hutchinson, London, 1968) p.7.

⁹⁸ Morgenthau, *Christian Science Monitor*, July 19, 1968.

Noam Chomsky. The group noticeably underrepresented, however, was that of political science in general and its related specialisations in International Relations and Asian studies.⁹⁹ The lack of attention given to the mounting crisis in Vietnam on the part of political science was remarkable. In the ten year period from 1959 to 1969 the three leading political science journals in the United States contained precisely *one* article devoted to Vietnam out of a possible nine hundred and twenty-four!¹⁰⁰

In part, this was the result of the arid professionalisation which had crept into political science and International Relations. 'Professionalism' required academics to stick to publications in their narrow, preferably uncontroversial specialisms and, above all, avoid taking an active part in the public sphere. Asian studies had for a long time, of course, been branded with the stigma of the McCarthyist purges so it is hardly surprising that this was a particularly reactionary branch of scholarship. Lucian Pye of MIT warned that those of his colleagues involved in protesting against government policy in Vietnam were guilty of the apparently unconscionable failing of "non-academic behavior." Robert Scalapino accused those of his fellow Berkeley academics involved in teach-ins of "anti-intellectualism."¹⁰¹ Morgenthau had his professional commitment questioned by the eminently forgettable Heinz Eulau, a professional's professional if ever there was one.¹⁰² Professional prerogatives were also used to try and discredit Vietnam critics whose backgrounds were outside the subject. How dare Noam Chomsky, a linguist after all, think that he was entitled to roam across professional boundaries! Even Martin Luther King was turned upon when he deigned to stray from his

⁹⁹ "Dismal branches of American scholarship", according to Noam Chomsky, and "closely identified with American imperial goals." Chomsky, *American Power and the New Mandarins*, p.72.

¹⁰⁰ Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals*, pp.156-157.

¹⁰¹ See McCaughey, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise*, pp.233-234.

¹⁰² See Norman D. Palmer (ed.), 'Conference Discussion on Objectives', *A Design for Political Science* (American Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia, December 1966) p.119.

appointed brief of civil rights in order to condemn American actions in Vietnam.¹⁰³

The other factor, as Morgenthau pointed out, was that large sections of political science, especially International Relations, had simply moved too close to government, in one form or another, for its members to be able to act as independent critics, even when they opposed government policy. One of Morgenthau's most frequently voiced criticisms during the 1960s was that many of his colleagues who shared his concerns were not prepared to make their views known in public.¹⁰⁴ Nor, it seems, were many of those who had turned against the war from within the government prepared to make a public declaration of the fact. Arthur Schlesinger Jr appears to have been so compromised by his connection to the Democrat administrations of the 1960s that, at the Washington teach-in in 1965, he appeared to observers to want to support and attack the government simultaneously.¹⁰⁵ Others simply slid out of government with barely a murmur. By 1967 McGeorge Bundy, Bill Moyers and George Ball had all resigned over their misgivings. Robert McNamara left in February 1968 to become President of the World Bank.¹⁰⁶

Of these four, only Ball had opposed the war from the beginning and made plain his dissent to President Johnson. Ball was a europhile convinced, correctly, that America's core interests lay in Western Europe rather than in the periphery of Asia. He had also, like John Kenneth Galbraith, been given a very early and direct lesson in the limits to power. As a member of the Strategic Bombing Survey which had examined the effects of the Allied

¹⁰³ Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p.60.

¹⁰⁴ Morgenthau, 'Truth and Power', p.12. Like De Tocqueville, Morgenthau thought he detected a conformism in American society which worked to mitigate against dissent.

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Kopkind, 'The Teach-In on Vietnam', *The New Republic*, May 29, 1965, pp.15-16.

¹⁰⁶ If the often savage reviews of his *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* are any indication he still appears unable, over thirty years after his resignation, to face up to the calamitous errors of judgment for which he was responsible. See, for example, Roger Hilsman, 'McNamara's War - Against the Truth: A Review Essay', *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 111, No.1, 1996, pp.151-163: "To put it bluntly, McNamara twists the truth, falsely accuses others, and soils the historical record" (p.151).

bombing of Germany during World War Two he had discovered, to his and everyone else's astonishment, that bombing had been relatively ineffective and had actually served to intensify the German resistance.¹⁰⁷ This, naturally, made him sceptical of what could be achieved in Vietnam through bombing. Ball assumed a curious dual stance as the Vietnam escalation proceeded. In the privacy of the White House he opposed every step that deepened the American involvement. In public, until his resignation, he defended the government policy at every opportunity, even taking a prominent role in shepherding the Tonkin Gulf Resolution through the Congress.¹⁰⁸ Hilsman believes that Johnson "used Ball shamelessly" as evidence that he had considered dovish arguments against the war, when in fact he had never taken them seriously at all.¹⁰⁹

Morgenthau, for his part, simply could not see how Ball's alleged dissent could be taken seriously when in the public sphere he had been so closely identified with the escalation of the war.¹¹⁰ When questioned about reports that Ball had opposed the war, Morgenthau replied that Ball "might be compared to a Court Jester. There was no open opposition. No one would speak up. Nobody put his career on the line and resigned over the war."¹¹¹ Ball always defended the correctness of his actions on both moral and political grounds but Dileo believes, like Morgenthau, that a considerable amount of ego and ambition were also involved: "wanting to preserve his career options and availability for high appointive office Bell was simply loath to cross a Democratic president."¹¹² McNamara has written that he did not speak against the war because to do so "would have been a violation of my

¹⁰⁷ Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, pp.161,495.

¹⁰⁸ David L. Dileo, *George Ball, Vietnam, and the Rethinking of Containment* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1991) p.136.

¹⁰⁹ Hilsman, 'McNamara's War', p.161.

¹¹⁰ Significantly Ball, alone among Vietnam dissenters, maintained warm relations with Johnson right up until the latter's death in 1972.

¹¹¹ *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 187.

¹¹² Dileo, *George Ball*, p.164. Dileo also points to Ball's patricianly disdain for the perceived crudities of the anti-war movement.

responsibility to the President and my oath to uphold the Constitution."¹¹³ The suggestion that he would somehow have been guilty of violating constitutional precepts is the purest nonsense, and it is a very distorted kind of ethical framework indeed which would place loyalty to Johnson above the public interest.¹¹⁴ In looking back on the period, Morgenthau believed that a courageous president or a few high-profile dissidents from his administration could have been enough to end the war.¹¹⁵

The catastrophe in Vietnam vindicated much of what Morgenthau had been saying about American foreign policy during the Cold War. His finest hour, in a personal sense, came during a televised debate in which he grappled with McGeorge Bundy, who attempted to discredit Morgenthau by pointing to past misjudgements.¹¹⁶ Morgenthau's response was extremely well-judged, as the transcript records:

"I am honored by the selective quotations from my writings. As I have said before ...nobody who deals with foreign policy can be always right... I should, however, also say... that I have not always been wrong - and especially when it comes to Vietnam Mr Bundy might have quoted certain things I wrote in '61 and '62 or quoted what I wrote after my interview with President Diem about what the future of South Vietnam might be. So I think that no useful purpose is served by pointing to one mistake, and I admit freely that I have made mistakes - I admit many more than Mr Bundy has found - (laughter) - but I

¹¹³ McNamara quoted in Hilsman, 'McNamara's War', p.161.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.* p.162.

¹¹⁵ Morgenthau, 'The Intellectual, Political, and Moral Roots of U.S Failure in Vietnam', p.126; 'The Web of Falsehood': review of David Halberstam's 'The Best and the Brightest,' *The New Leader*, December 31, 1972, p.16.

¹¹⁶ Bundy, incidentally, lied about having done his own research into Morgenthau's publications: Morgenthau, "I admire the efficiency of Mr Bundy's office." Bundy: "I do my own." A letter in the *Johnson Papers* confirms that Bundy's material was prepared by one Howard Wriggins of the Policy Planning Council. See the letter from James C. Thomson Jr, National Security Council, to McGeorge Bundy, May 13, 1965, *Johnson Papers*, Microform Reel 7. For Morgenthau's debate with Bundy (and others) see "Vietnam Dialogue: Mr Bundy and the Professors", CBS Special News Report, June 21, 1965. A transcript is retained in the *Morgenthau Papers*.

have not always been wrong, and in any case, it is no argument to say, this man has been wrong about Laos, how can he be right about Vietnam?"¹¹⁷

Rather than attempt to defend himself directly, Morgenthau freely admitted past errors and disarmed his audience with a bit of self-deprecating humour. He then pointed out that challenging him over what he had said in the past was hardly a persuasive way to go about defending the government's position in the present crisis in Vietnam. The effect was to draw attention to Bundy as he really was: arrogant and aloof. And far from encouraging government supporters or causing opponents to think again, Bundy's reluctance to engage directly with the subject merely served to stimulate further doubts. Halberstam suggests that Bundy's "brittle performance" marked the beginning of the turn in his reputation, both in Washington and the rest of the country.¹¹⁸

Morgenthau did, then, play an important part in the opposition to the war but even here one still gains the impression that his fundamental message was no more acceptable, or even intelligible, to most of his fellow dissidents than it was to members of the executive. For much of the 'New Left' the American exercise of political violence in international politics was simply illegitimate in any form, whereas for Morgenthau it was simply that in this case American actions were both imprudent and unrelated to any national interest worth defending in this manner. There was, of course, an ethical critique here too in that American actions could be seen to be immoral because the ends being pursued could not conceivably justify the means being employed, but this was a much more subtle ethical view than the rather 'black and white' perspectives of many of those of the 'New Left'. Similarly, though

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p.620. Morgenthau himself confirmed that as the result of Bundy's "rather sorry performance" he was frequently told that many viewers previously inclined to the government's position found themselves with grave doubts for the first time. Morgenthau, 'Interview with Bernard Johnston', p.383. A psychologist wrote to Morgenthau about what he perceived as Bundy's "psychological imbalances" (!) *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 34.

Morgenthau was generally supportive when discussing the views and work of 'New Left' intellectuals like Noam Chomsky and Gabriel Kolko, he couldn't help but register the important differences with their positions. In a review of Chomsky's *At War with Asia* he stressed that Chomsky had performed an important political and moral function in drawing attention to American wrongs in Indochina, but he rejected Chomsky's "moral absolutism supported ...by a degree of economic determinism... In the picture the author paints of the political world, black and white, vice and virtue are clearly separated and there is never any doubt where they are located. This simplicity of moral judgement is of course a mere replica of the division of the world into good and evil nations on which ideological anti-communism thrives, only that the location of the attributes is here reversed."¹¹⁹ He, similarly, found Kolko's *The Politics of War* lacking in 'messiness': "he yields to the temptation of attributing to American policy a rational coherence and Machiavellian purpose which run counter to the historical evidence."¹²⁰

In short, Morgenthau's message that politics was a diabolical undertaking, shot through with "the frailty of human beings", was just as unintelligible to his fellow opponents of the Vietnam War as to the men holding the reigns of government.¹²¹ Under such circumstances, and faced with the additional pressures described earlier, it is hardly surprising that he could, at times, feel despondent about what he was doing. He once referred "to the complete usefulness of my endeavours to bring "the truth" to the attention of the policy-makers, from the president downward."¹²² His mood, in the early 1970s, must also have been affected by having observed a Republican Administration apparently repeating many of the mistakes of its

¹¹⁹ See Morgenthau's review of Chomsky's 'At War with Asia', *The New York Times Book Review*, June 17th, 1971.

¹²⁰ Morgenthau, 'Historical Justice and the Cold War', *New York Review of Books*, June 1969, p.3.

¹²¹ This expression comes from Morgenthau and Chomsky, 'The National Interest and the Pentagon Papers', *Partisan Review*, Vol.39, No.3, 1972, p.356.

¹²² *ibid.* p.354.

Democratic predecessor, under the guidance of a man who would have appeared at first glance to be much like himself - a Jewish-German émigré and political realist.

Henry Kissinger

It is probably the case that with no other human being did Morgenthau have a relationship as complex as that which he shared with Kissinger. Admiration, contempt, perhaps a certain amount of envy, Morgenthau was capable, it seems, of feeling all these things about Kissinger almost simultaneously. They undoubtedly had a great deal in common. His junior by some twenty years, Heinz Kissinger, as he was named by his parents, was born on May 27, 1923 in the Bavarian town of Fürth, not far from Nuremberg. A Jew, like Morgenthau, and also a bookish and introverted child, he appears to have experienced many of the same kinds of difficulties and humiliations familiar to Morgenthau, though publicly he has always downplayed the impact of anti-semitism, contrary to the recollections of his childhood associates.¹²³ He left Germany for America with his family in August 1938, a bare three months before *Kristallnacht*. Many of Kissinger's relatives - loyal German citizens like Morgenthau's - believed that the animus would pass and similarly paid for their misjudgment with their lives. In Kissinger's case some thirteen near relatives perished in the gas chambers.

Having the advantage of already having studied English, he appears to have adjusted to the new circumstances of his life in the United States very quickly. After graduating from high school he worked as a clerk during the day whilst attending the City College of New York in the evenings. His sights were set on accountancy until he was drafted in early 1943 and sent to a training camp in Louisiana. It was here that he met a charismatic young

¹²³ See Isaacson, *Kissinger*, Chapter One.

Prussian by the name of Fritz Kraemer who came to act as his patron, ensuring that he was taken out of the infantry and assigned as a translator to the American forces in Europe and later convincing him to go to Harvard.¹²⁴ He immediately distinguished himself by writing an undergraduate thesis, with the suitably immodest title of 'The Meaning of History', which at some three hundred and eighty-three pages was longer than anything previously submitted by an undergraduate and which led to the introduction of a rule limiting future undergraduate theses to one third of that length!¹²⁵

It was in Harvard in 1950 where he taught for a semester that Morgenthau first met Kissinger, by now a PhD candidate, and was immediately impressed with his obvious intellect and ability.¹²⁶ In his obituary of Morgenthau, Kissinger stressed that they had "...remained close through all the intellectual upheavals and disputes of two and a half decades" but the correspondence between them, copies of which are held in the *Morgenthau Papers*, intimates that their relationship was not as straightforward as Kissinger implies.¹²⁷ They were regular, if not very frequent, correspondents for much of the 1950s and 1960s but following an exchange in 1968 all letters ceased until 1974, at which time Kissinger wrote to Morgenthau offering to meet with him to discuss their differences over Middle East policy.¹²⁸ In May a further letter from Winston Lord suggested that Kissinger would be very pleased with Morgenthau's agreement to serve as a consultant to him and the Policy Planning Staff.¹²⁹ It is hard to see this as anything other than an exercise in rapprochement on Kissinger's part. And

¹²⁴ *ibid.* pp.39-46.

¹²⁵ *ibid.* pp.64-65.

¹²⁶ Morgenthau, 'Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State', Address to the Lehrman Institute, March 17, 1976. A transcript can be found in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 175.

¹²⁷ For Kissinger's undeniably moving obituary see 'A gentle analyst of power', *The New Republic*, August 29, 1980, pp.12-14.

¹²⁸ Letter from Henry Kissinger, March 23, 1974, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 33.

¹²⁹ Letter from Winston Lord, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 62.

the source of their disagreement in 1968 and subsequent silence was, of course, Vietnam.

Kissinger's initial letter in 1968 was written in response to an article of Morgenthau's in which he criticised Nelson Rockefeller's proposals for Vietnam as "the most elaborate attempt on the part of supporters of the war to cover their tracks." Given Kissinger's closeness to Rockefeller at this time it amounted to criticism of Kissinger too and he found "the tone and the content of [the] article extremely painful."¹³⁰ He further protested that both his and Rockefeller's "positions on major foreign policy issues will stand up fairly well." In his response Morgenthau regretted any hurt that may have been caused but he stood by his original analysis which had questioned Kissinger's political judgement:

"I see no reason to change my original evaluation. Both of you have supported the war in public and lent your considerable prestige to it. Both of you realize now ...that the war cannot be won and must be liquidated. But it is impossible to do this while maintaining one's original justifications for the war. (NP)The real issue in South Vietnam is who shall govern, the Communists or the opponents? Both of you have assumed that the Saigon government is the legitimate government of South Vietnam... You tell the Vietcong to stop acting like guerrillas, that is, to divest themselves of the main source of their political and military strength... The Vietcong have naturally no intention to surrender at the negotiating table what they have been able to defend on the battlefield... (NP)Thus I conclude that your proposal is as unrealistic as all the others which have been advanced by the supporters of the war. For they try to combine the faulty assumptions upon which the support for the war was based with attempts at liquidating it."¹³¹

Kissinger replied:

¹³⁰ Letter from Henry Kissinger, October 9, 1968, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 33.

¹³¹ Letter to Henry Kissinger, October 22, 1968, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 33.

"I think you are mistaken on one point. I never supported the war in public. Before 1963, this was because I did not know enough about it and because I tended to believe the official statements. After the assassination of Diem I thought the situation was hopeless. In 1965 when I first visited Vietnam I became convinced that what we were doing was hopeless. I then decided to work within the government to attempt to get the war ended. Whether this was the right decision we will never know, but it was not ineffective. My view now is not very different from what you wrote in the *New Republic*... though as a practical matter I might try to drag on the process for a while because of the international repercussions."¹³²

He was, of course, soon to become the National Security Adviser and then Secretary of State of an administration that would 'drag on the process' for a further five years. And as the 1973 agreement predictably unravelled and the Vietnam saga moved towards its final and inevitable conclusion, Kissinger's biographer reports that he was still "...raging about the need for the United States to become reengaged in Vietnam."¹³³ It was also simply untrue that he had never supported the war in public. In December 1965, *after* his return from the trip in which he was supposed to have concluded that the situation was hopeless, he defended American policy in Vietnam during a satellite debate shown on CBS against Michael Foot and two students from Oxford. The same month he joined 190 Harvard academics in signing a petition in support of Johnson's handling of the war. In private he had written two letters to McGeorge Bundy in support of Johnson's decision to send in combat troops.¹³⁴ As Isaacson has remarked "to his intellectual friends, he stressed his qualms about America's growing involvement in Vietnam. To

¹³² Letter from Henry Kissinger, November 13, 1968, Box 33.

¹³³ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, p.602.

¹³⁴ *ibid.* pp.117-119.

those in the government, he claimed to be in favor of standing firm against communist aggression."¹³⁵

Beyond their specific disagreement over Vietnam it was precisely this slipperiness, this duplicity, which diminished Morgenthau's admiration for Kissinger. Much of Kissinger's duplicity was, of course, the product of his immense personal ambition. In a lecture Morgenthau once described him as a 'courtier' which seems entirely appropriate.¹³⁶ In the space of seven years he managed to change his mind four times on the question of the efficacy of tactical nuclear weapons, largely in response to the shifting political winds.¹³⁷ He adopted Nelson Rockefeller as a patron in the mid-1950s but published a book, *Necessity for Choice*, a few weeks after the 1960 election which has been described as "a manifesto for the Democrats." His strenuous efforts to attract Kennedy's eye through McGeorge Bundy and Schlesinger came, however, to nothing more than a part-time consultancy.¹³⁸ He was back with Rockefeller for his patrons unsuccessful bids for the Republican presidential nomination in 1964 and 1968 and on the latter occasion was rumoured to have been leaking information gleaned from the Paris Peace talks to the Nixon campaign team. He was duly rewarded with a job in the incoming Nixon administration, much to the disgust of Rockefeller's staffers.¹³⁹

Morgenthau was only too aware of what Kissinger was capable of and he indicated so publicly on a number of occasions.¹⁴⁰ He noted Kissinger's general propensity "to bend his scholarship to the exigencies of his political

¹³⁵ *ibid.* p.117.

¹³⁶ See the New School for Social Research Lecture Series, April 18, 1972. A transcript can be found in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 175.

¹³⁷ Isaacson, *Kissinger*, pp.85-114.

¹³⁸ *ibid.* pp.106-113.

¹³⁹ *ibid.* pp.116, 125-138. Rockefeller himself appears to have been remarkably magnanimous towards Kissinger.

¹⁴⁰ See 'Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State'; 'The Elite Protects Itself', *The New Republic*, May 3, 1975, pp.17-19; Review of Stephen R. Graubart's, 'Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind', *Chicago Tribune Book World*, June 24, 1973.

interests."¹⁴¹ He contrasted Kissinger's private distaste for the Johnson Administration's policies in Vietnam with his public support.¹⁴² He was, however, much gentler with Kissinger than with the other cutters and trimmers of the intellectual world:

"Inevitably, if your ambition is not limited to scholarship but extends to the political sphere, you have to trim your sails to the prevailing winds. It is a tribute to both Kissinger's sagacity and decency that, as far as Vietnam is concerned, he compromised his scholarship much less than did some of his eminent colleagues."¹⁴³

No-one else was ever extended this kind of latitude by Morgenthau and it is a measure of the complexity of his feelings towards Kissinger.

In his obituary of Morgenthau, Kissinger stressed that on the question of Vietnam "we both believed America was overextended; we both sought a way out of the dilemma. Hans wanted to cut the Gordian knot in one dramatic move; I chose a different route."¹⁴⁴ It simply wasn't the case, though, that their differences over Vietnam could be reduced to tactics. They were also the product of subtly different political views which can be illuminated by their readings of the diplomacy of the nineteenth century, in particular the part played by Metternich. For Morgenthau, Metternich amounted to nothing more than a failure because of his stubborn resistance to change which, ultimately, was irresistible. A statesman should seek to mould the forces of change rather than mount futile rearguard actions. Kissinger's take on Metternich was rather more ambivalent. He praised Metternich for guiding his country through "39 years of crisis by a tour de force perhaps never excelled."¹⁴⁵ Metternich was the last of the generation "to whom the "great

¹⁴¹ Review of 'Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind'. Also see 'Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State', p.2.

¹⁴² Morgenthau, 'Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State', p.2.

¹⁴³ Morgenthau, Review of 'Kissinger: Portrait of a Mind'.

¹⁴⁴ Kissinger, 'A Gentle Analyst of Power', p.13.

¹⁴⁵ Kissinger, 'Reflections on American Diplomacy', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.35, No.1, October 1956, pp.37-56

clockwork" or the "golden age" was more than an idle dream."¹⁴⁶ Though he accepted that Metternich's increasingly rigid opposition to any change was ultimately futile, he admired his diplomacy anyway and found "an element of grandeur" in Metternich's obtuseness.¹⁴⁷ His conclusion was that it was the conservative's task to forestall revolutions rather than defeat them.¹⁴⁸

The problem was that upon reaching office Kissinger, in effect, turned himself into the Metternich of the late twentieth century. In what has rightly been called his "obsession with stability" Kissinger may even have exceeded the short-sightedness of his immediate predecessors.¹⁴⁹ At any sign of the appearance of communist or even more modest socialist governments around the world Kissinger committed the United States to defend or restore the status quo. In Greece, as Morgenthau put it, the United States supported "an incompetent and depraved ...coterie of Colonels against parliamentary democracy because the former would bring stability to American-Greek relations..." The result was the collapse of the *modus vivendi* in Cyprus and the rise to power in Greece of an anti-American government.¹⁵⁰ And as Morgenthau pointed out, it made absolutely no sense whatever for the United States to be pursuing a pragmatic policy of adjustment to the ideological differences with China and the Soviet Union whilst simultaneously adopting a renewed combativeness in the peripheries.¹⁵¹ What this demonstrated was that, ultimately, Kissinger was unable to shed a reflexive and unwise conservatism that Morgenthau was able to look beyond.

¹⁴⁶ Kissinger, 'The Conservative Dilemma: Reflections on the Political Thought of Metternich', *American Political Science Review*, Vol.48, No.4, December 1954, p.1021.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid.* pp.1027-1028.

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.* p.1030.

¹⁴⁹ Stanley Hoffmann, *Primacy or World Order* (McGraw Hill, New York, 1978) p.70.

¹⁵⁰ Morgenthau, 'Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State', pp.9-10.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.* p.15. Also see his letter to *Time Magazine* of April 21, 1975 in which he asserted that American foreign policy was in a shambles because of the unsophisticated commitment to the status quo: "...Mr Kissinger's foreign policy is being ruined by assumptions and conceptions that have burdened the conduct of our foreign relations for decades and that the Secretary of State has been unwilling or unable to replace with sounder conceptions or assumptions."

It must have been particularly disappointing for Morgenthau to witness Kissinger's failure because in other respects they did indeed share much in the way of a common outlook. As an incomer to American society Kissinger, like Morgenthau, was well placed to understand the peculiarities of the American approach to foreign affairs - the tendency to think of international politics in terms of the domestic political experience; the weakness of "American empiricism and its quest for methodological certainty"; the general reluctance to think in terms of power and the lack of tragic experience which meant that the warnings of his fellow European exiles were perceived, as he cleverly put it, as the "Cassandra cries of abstracted egg-heads."¹⁵² All this could also have been taken almost directly from Morgenthau. Kissinger, similarly, accepted the Weberian antinomies of bureaucracy and creativity and their equivalents of instrumental and value-rationality.¹⁵³

His approach to foreign policy has been nicely encapsulated by Stanley Hoffmann as a "curious mix of neoclassicism and neoromanticism."¹⁵⁴ The 'neoclassical' consists in Kissinger's turn to the nineteenth century to provide models of diplomatic practice. The 'neoromantic' lay in his attempts to use Bismarckian methods in the vastly different circumstances of late-twentieth century America. It also involved an audacious effort by Kissinger to overcome one of the fundamental features of modernity - bureaucracy - through the Weberian antidote of charisma - his own! Encouraged by his President, Kissinger sought to neutralise the bureaucracy, in particular the State Department, through the creation of committees with himself at their head which either co-opted or simply ignored the existing bureaucracy.¹⁵⁵ And like no-one before him in the history of modern American diplomacy,

¹⁵² Kissinger, 'Reflections on American Diplomacy', pp.38-41.

¹⁵³ Kissinger, *A World Restored* (Universal Library, New York, 1964) pp.326-329.

¹⁵⁴ Hoffmann, *Primacy or World Order*, p.37.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.* p.51.

Kissinger took responsibility for conducting high-level negotiations himself, from strategic arms talks, to crisis in the Middle East, to 'back channel' explorations over Vietnam.

The Morgenthau of 1950 might have welcomed all of these developments unequivocally. Kissinger's circumvention of the regular bureaucracy had seemingly opened up the possibility for the revived diplomacy which had been urged by Morgenthau. He seemed to share Morgenthau's political realism and the desire to bring a new, prudential ethos to the pursuit of the national interest. The Morgenthau of 1970 though, had already learned from the Johnson Administration that concentrated executive power could be a dangerous thing, even within the broader context of a stable democracy. He now understood, too, that bureaucracy could simply not be sidestepped in a state with the complex and multifarious global commitments of the United States. Kissinger's unwillingness to delegate had "distorted the distribution of functions between the Secretary of State and the Department of State."¹⁵⁶

And though a new prudence would, indeed, have been welcome, Kissinger appeared to lose sight of it upon entering government. The Nixon Doctrine was supposed to bring about a reduction of America's commitments in the world, but under Kissinger's administration of it there was actually little discernible evidence that America's vital interests were being separated from the peripheral. From Angola to Vietnam and Chile and all parts between, every crisis seemed to Kissinger to have some vital bearing on the central East-West balance and had, therefore, to be treated accordingly. For a hard-headed man who dealt in terms of interests the irony was that he seemed to link almost every act of intervention around the globe to the defence of something as incalculable, as intangible as 'prestige'. Morgenthau took the notion seriously too, but his was the more balanced perspective on

¹⁵⁶ Morgenthau, 'Henry Kissinger as Secretary of State', p.10.

how important it actually was. "How much", Morgenthau asked rhetorically, "did American prestige suffer in the long run from the debacle of the Bay of Pigs ... " Had it not been the case that "when France demonstrated the wisdom and courage to liquidate two losing enterprises on which it had staked its "honor", its prestige rose to heights it had not attained since the beginning of the Second World War ..."¹⁵⁷ In any event, what could have been more damaging to American prestige than the television images showing the damaging split within American society itself, or of the brutal means being employed in Vietnam? In the end, the Nixon Administration fought on in Vietnam until reaching a transparently temporary 'settlement' in 1973 that could probably have been attained four years and many lives earlier.¹⁵⁸

Kissinger and Morgenthau had re-established their communication in 1974 but Morgenthau continued to offer the same odd mix of praise and condemnation of Kissinger in public. In mid-1975 he observed that Kissinger had "walked on into the trap of Vietnam - and on and on and on. And now it is too late for his reputation. He knows that he will be remembered less as the builder of détente than as the destroyer of Cambodia."¹⁵⁹ Some fifteen months later the following letter to the editor appeared in the New York Times:

"James Reston has praised Secretary of State Kissinger in his recent columns and has quoted foreign statesmen assembled at the United Nations in the same vein. He has also expressed his conviction that the tenure of office of Mr Kissinger will soon come to an end. (NP) Mr Kissinger is one of the most gifted statesmen on the international scene today and one of the few outstanding Secretaries of State who have served the United States. Is it not an enormous waste of extremely scarce human resources to retire so

¹⁵⁷ Morgenthau, 'Vietnam: Shadow and Substance', *New York Review of Books*, August 30, 1965, p.6.

¹⁵⁸ For which, of course, Kissinger was absurdly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He, predictably, continues to deny that the Nixon Administration needlessly prolonged the war. See *Diplomacy*, p.695.

¹⁵⁹ 'The Elite Protects Itself', p.19.

extraordinary a talent to private life, simply because there happens to be a Presidential election? If both candidates are really dedicated to the common good, of which an intelligent bipartisan foreign policy forms an intrinsic part, might it not be incumbent upon them to declare that, regardless of what will happen on Nov. 2, Mr. Kissinger will continue to take care of the foreign relations of the United States?"¹⁶⁰

The relationship between Hans Morgenthau and Henry Kissinger was, truly, an extraordinary one.

The 1970s: A Troubled Decade

Morgenthau and Kissinger were back on close terms by the late 1970s and met for breakfast a few weeks before Morgenthau's death. There was, however, no hiding Morgenthau's disappointment that the disaster in Vietnam had not been avoided. It must have been especially dismaying to have seen the Nixon Administration repeat so many of the errors of its predecessor in Vietnam: the gross overestimation of what could be achieved through the bombing campaign; the same overbearing hubris which led to the belief that the conflict could be successfully 'managed'; the same inability to appreciate the determination of the Vietnamese to unify their country and free it from colonial domination - what Kissinger expressed in his own inimitable way as Washington's failure "to understand how its adversary calculated the costs and benefits."¹⁶¹ It was, of course, Kissinger's failure too. "I can't believe that a fourth-rate power like North Vietnam doesn't have a breaking point" was how he phrased the case for escalating the war in 1969.¹⁶² He was still repeating the claim nearly twenty years later:

¹⁶⁰ Morgenthau, Letter to the Editor, *New York Times*, Oct. 2, 1976.

¹⁶¹ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p.661.

¹⁶² Isaacson, 'Kissinger', p.246.

"It simply could not have been true that North Vietnam was the only country in history to prove impervious to every conceivable calculation of risk and benefit."¹⁶³

Perhaps not, but probably nothing short of the levelling of North Vietnam would have done and no country claiming to exercise power responsibly could have acted in such a way. In broader terms the irony was that the American failure - political and moral - had confirmed Morgenthau's original post-war thesis that the United States was not fundamentally different from other states in the exercise of power, or at least no more immune than any other from the perils of the political. It was his later hopes for an 'exceptional' America that had been shattered by Vietnam.

His outlook was also affected, negatively, by the general climate of the United States in the 1970s, just as the prosperity and stability of the 1950s had fed into his relatively more optimistic world-view of that time. Race riots, the damage done to the urban environment under the impact of narcotics, the stagflation caused by the oil shocks, acts of 'terrorism' which seemed to heighten the sense of American impotence and so on. For the first time since the Industrial Revolution had so profoundly altered the fundamental relationship of man to nature, questions were beginning to be raised about the 'limits to growth' and Morgenthau was beginning to express fears for the health of the planet's long-term natural environment.¹⁶⁴ Added to this was the crisis in government in which the United States had "experienced two presidencies in succession whose arbitrary, illegal and unconstitutional rule tended to reduce democratic choice to exercises in futility." Lyndon Johnson, "the Julius Caesar of the American Republic", had been followed by Richard Nixon who "bids fair to become its Caligula."^(!)¹⁶⁵ All of these developments

¹⁶³ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p.661.

¹⁶⁴ See 'The Contraction of America', unpublished article for the *New York Times*, September 1973, pp.13, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 17.

¹⁶⁵ Morgenthau, 'The Decline of Democratic Government', *New Republic*, Vol.17, No.19, p.13.

gave rise to a mood in Morgenthau as dark as it had been since the emerging tensions of the Cold War and the beginnings of the nuclear arms race in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1975 he wrote that "the moral and material decline of the West is an observable fact. What is not observable is the kind of order that could take the place of the fading one created and maintained by the power of the West. Instead of the authors of a new order created and supported by a new center of power, what appears on the horizon of the civilised world is the specter of anarchy, with legal arrangements, institutions, and procedures being utterly out of tune with the objective technological conditions of the age."¹⁶⁶ Others were referring to 'The End of Liberalism' or 'The New Feudalism'.¹⁶⁷

In his working life, too, he was far from settled. As we have already seen, he had moved from Chicago to New York in 1968, possibly because of pressures at Chicago related to his activities as an opponent of the Vietnam War. His general frustration at the timidity and cupidity of the political science profession led to an unsuccessful campaign in 1971 to become President of the American Political Science Association as the nominated candidate of the Caucus for a New Political Science.¹⁶⁸ His official statement in support of his candidacy repeated what he had been saying for many years: "American political science is in urgent need of ceasing to be identified with the status quo and the powers-to-be. It must assume the mission, which is the mission of any science worthy of the name, to speak truth to power rather than justify and rationalize power in pseudo-scientific terms. Presidential leadership can contribute to that end."¹⁶⁹

His opponent, sponsored by 'The Committee for a Responsible Political Science', was ironically none other than the same Heinz G. Eulau who had

¹⁶⁶ Morgenthau, 'The Decline of the West', *Partisan Review*, Vol.42, 1975, pp.515-516.

¹⁶⁷ See Theodore J. Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (WW Norton and Co, New York, 1969).

¹⁶⁸ His candidature was publicly supported by scholars of the calibre of Hannah Arendt, Samuel Beer, Louis Hartz, Stanley Hoffmann and Aristide Zolberg.

¹⁶⁹ See the copy of the statement retained in Box 4 of the *Morgenthau Papers*.

questioned the level of Morgenthau's professional commitment a few years earlier. Unsurprisingly, the statement in support of Eulau's candidature misses no opportunity to inform us of the ever diligent Professor Eulau's contribution to the 'profession': "as a member of the Association's Council and Executive Committee he never missed a meeting." (!!) His complete failure to engage with any of the substantive political problems of the United States during the preceding decade was, apparently, of no consequence.¹⁷⁰

Given the disappointments of the preceding decade one could have forgiven Morgenthau for choosing to slide quietly into semi-retirement and it is admirable that he continued to remain so active in the political sphere. One of the most surprising elements of this was his sudden interest in Jewish affairs. He was heavily involved in the efforts to secure the emigration from the Soviet Union of the orientalist Mikhail Zaid and Natan Scharansky and he came to be an unequivocal champion of Israel. He also became the chairman for the Academic Committee on Soviet Jewry, in which capacity he wrote the following, remarkable letter to President Carter:

"When the Soviet authorities are in such blatant violation of their own freely accepted commitments in the field of human rights, they cast a shadow on their faithfulness to other obligations. Accordingly we would caution against other agreements unless and until the Soviet Union puts into practice what it has accepted in principle - that in the nuclear age major powers have major responsibilities to promote universal values. For we strongly believe that a commitment to such shared values is a necessary precondition to meaningful international accords."¹⁷¹

This, in effect, stood everything he had said in the immediate post-war period on its head. His point then had been that it was precisely *because* of the nuclear age that major powers were obliged to set aside their differences of

¹⁷⁰ Intellectually, of course, Eulau has already been forgotten while we continue to read Morgenthau because of his involvement with the fundamental issues of his day.

¹⁷¹ Letter to President Carter, June 3, 1977, *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 2.

value in dealings with each other. Under such circumstances the promotion of universal values was likely to be dangerous rather than positively desirable. Even at the height of his infatuation with American exceptionalism he never suggested that other powers should be expected to subscribe to American values. Elsewhere he registered strong doubts about the very existence of human rights:

"To what extent is it both morally just and intellectually tenable to apply principles we hold dear to other nations that ... are impervious to them? ... I want to make the point that ... human rights are filtered through the intermediary of historic and social circumstance which will lead to different results in different times and under different social circumstances ... the principle of the defense of human rights cannot be consistently applied in foreign policy because it can and it must come in conflict with other interests that may be more important than the defense of human rights in a particular instance."¹⁷²

Had this abrupt change been the product of a fundamental re-evaluation of the Soviet Union? Morgenthau himself appeared to indicate so in testimony to Congress. "After many dealings with high-placed Russians, political and academic", he had "come to the conclusion which Acheson urged upon me 25 years ago: that the totalitarian regime is an extremely brutal and destructive regime, extinguishing all freedom of thought and conscience." It had "created a kind of moral and intellectual deformation in the minds of all its servants, which is an enormous impediment to normal relations - in a sense, makes normal relations quite impossible."¹⁷³ The puzzling question is why now, so late in life, should Morgenthau have come to think so differently? He cannot, after all, have been previously unaware of the brutalities of the Soviet regime which were common knowledge in the West

¹⁷² Morgenthau, 'Human Rights and Foreign Policy', CRIA, New York, 1979, pp.4,7.

¹⁷³ Morgenthau quoted in Nobel, 'Morgenthau's struggle with power', p.80.

as early as the 1930s. Moreover, in its 1970s incarnation it was significantly *less* brutal than it had been during Stalin's rule, for example. Nor was there any specific development in American-Soviet relations to suggest that the "intellectual deformation in the minds of all its servants" made "normal relations quite impossible." If anything, détente had suggested quite the opposite.

This is entirely speculative but I would like to suggest two possible contributory factors. The first is simply that Morgenthau's own ill-treatment at the hands of the government during the latter half of the 1960s increased his sensitivity towards the much greater suffering of others at the behest of the state elsewhere, even if upon more sober reflection, as indicated above, he continued to find the notion of universal human rights deeply problematic. The second is that, having had his hopes for American exceptionalism shattered by Vietnam he found, for the first time, some solace in his Jewishness. A relative has reported that he began to explore Hasidic thought and lore and that "he cherished his conversations with one of New York's prominent Hasidic rabbis."¹⁷⁴ It is a phenomenon well known to sociologists that, in the West at least, there is a strong correlation between advanced years and religious belief and observance. There is, however, nothing to suggest that Morgenthau finally came to faith at the end of his life. He was never one of those self-absorbed human beings who fill their lives with untemplated activity before belatedly turning their thoughts to the question of the hereafter, or indeed, the absence of it. An awareness of his mortality cannot have come as a shock to him. It is more likely that he came to a discovery that Hannah Arendt had made some fifty years earlier: that beneath the outer layers of identity, of German and American, he was, in the end, inescapably a Jew.

¹⁷⁴ George Eckstein, 'Hans Morgenthau: A Personal Memoir', *Social Research*, Vol. X, Winter, 1981, p.651.

Much of this is necessarily speculative because he has left us almost nothing concerned with his 'inner life'. If any more intimate correspondence ever existed it has not been left in the *Morgenthau Papers* and despite the urgings of Arthur Schlesinger, among others, to write his memoirs he died in 1980 without having left a record of his life.¹⁷⁵ Henry Kissinger has written of his final meeting with Morgenthau:

"I saw Hans for the last time at breakfast a few weeks ago. He had grown quite frail, though mentally he was as alert as ever. His professorship at the New School had just ended. He spoke of how much teaching meant to him. Everyone must feel he makes a difference to the world, he said. And his vocation was teaching, which he hoped to continue. I told him he had already made a big difference to the world; he did not have to prove himself constantly. He did not quite believe it. His life was his work. As he said on another occasion, he saw no sense in extending the one by cutting down on the other."¹⁷⁶

It was entirely appropriate that his final intellectual project, left unfinished upon his death, was a book on Abraham Lincoln.¹⁷⁷ For it was Abraham Lincoln, more than anyone else in the history of American political life, who understood the tragedy of politics.

¹⁷⁵ See Schlesinger's letter of July 14, 1978 in the *Morgenthau Papers*, Box 53.

¹⁷⁶ Kissinger, 'A gentle analyst of power', pp.13-14.

¹⁷⁷ Kenneth Thompson was entrusted by Morgenthau with the task of 'completion', but even his intervention cannot disguise the fact that the text left by Morgenthau was not close to being ready for publication. See Morgenthau, 'The Mind of Abraham Lincoln: A Study in Detachment and Practicality', in Kenneth Thompson (ed.), *Essays on Lincoln's Faith and Politics*, (New York, 1983) pp. 3-101.

Appendix: A Note on the Sociology of the Intellectual

What, then, is an intellectual? As Raymond Aron noted, a wide range of interpretations is possible; at the broadest involving virtually all educated non-manual workers and narrowly defined involving only the most rarefied of activities: poetry, painting, sculpture and philosophy drawn from what Aron calls 'the inner circle'.¹ What I would like to suggest here is that in my interpretation the individual is defined somewhat less by function and position and more by disposition. Intellectuals are those who concern themselves with questions beyond the everyday routines of reproduction and accumulation. They are interested in exploring the most fundamental questions of human existence and evolution. Who, or what, are we? What is the essence of truth, or of justice, or of progress?²

This disposition cannot, of course, be wholly removed from questions of function and other material problems. Intellectual contemplation requires the existence of at least a rudimentary surplus for the satisfaction of material needs (even as rudimentary as that of a British University lecturer!). And given the pressing professional and career imperatives of advanced economies marked by a highly specialised division of labour it is more likely that intellectuals will be found in universities than elsewhere, though it is still possible to find a relatively small number of writers, poets, artists and others who are able to earn an independent living. This is not to suggest that intellectuals cannot be found in other walks of life. It is even possible to conceive, for example, of an intellectual accountant though the extreme

¹ Raymond Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, trans. Terence Kilmarton, (W.W. Norton, New York, 1955) p.206.

² As Edward Shils puts it, intellectuals are "...persons with an unusual sensibility ... an uncommon reflectiveness about the nature of their universe and the roles which govern their society". They are driven by an "...interior need to penetrate beyond the screen of immediate concrete experience...". Edward Shils, *The Intellectuals and the Powers and Other Essays* (University of Chicago Press, 1972) p.1.

duality explicit in this kind of existence necessarily renders the combination an unlikely one. Beyond this orientation however, the question of what, if anything, the intellectual is to be concerned with beyond contemplation is an extremely problematic one.

The noun 'intellectual' appears to be of relatively recent provenance. It was first used during the Dreyfus Affair in France as a derogatory term by the Right in their attacks on the various poets, writers, and other 'men of letters' who had dared to challenge the prerogatives of Church, State, and Armed Forces.³ The pre-eminent Dreyfusard was, of course Emile Zola and he often became a focus for the resentment of the Right:

"The interference of this novelist in a matter of military justice seems to me no less important than, let us say, the intervention of a police captain in a problem of syntax or versification... As for this petition that is being circulated among the Intellectuals! The mere fact that one has recently created this word Intellectuals to designate, as though they were an aristocracy, individuals who live in laboratories and libraries, proclaims one of the most ridiculous eccentricities of our time."⁴

The collective noun 'intelligentsia' is something like fifty years older having first been used in Eastern Europe and, especially, Russia. As with 'intellectual' the word conveyed a group that was often critical of established authority but was also understood to occupy a position separate from that of the normal class structure.⁵

Together, the nouns convey to two elements most commonly associated with intellectuals in their modern incarnation: as dissidents, critics seeking to 'speak truth to power' and as 'free floating' agents who are in some

³ On this etymology see Jerzy Szacki, 'Intellectuals between Politics and Culture', in Ian Maclean, Alan Montefiore and Peter Winch (eds.), *The Political Responsibility of Intellectuals* (Cambridge University Press, 1990) p.231; Robert J. Brym, *Intellectuals and Politics* (Allen and Unwin, London, 1980) pp.11-12; Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, pp.208-209.

⁴ Ferdinand Brunetiere quoted in Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (The Noonday Press, New York, 1987) p.107.

⁵ Aron, *Opium of the Intellectuals*, p.208; Brym, *Intellectuals and Politics*, p.11.

fundamental sense independent of existing class and power structures. Modernity also creates a fundamental paradox for intellectuals. In one sense the enormous expansion in wealth has created the surplus to enable intellectuals to attain a position somewhat removed from the constraints of power structures.⁶ This vast new pool of wealth has, however, necessarily been a function of an intensely specialised division of labour which has threatened to bury the relatively independent vantage point of the intellectual amidst the clamour of interest group politics and the instrumentally rational advice of the 'expert'.

If, then, modernity has given rise to a massive increase in the number of intellectuals and the scope of intellectual life this is not to suggest that it is only during modern times that the problem of the broader place and disposition of those we now call intellectuals has existed. When Socrates chose hemlock rather than recanting what he believed to be true he, in a certain sense, made the ultimate commitment to truth over power. Nor has it always been the case that intellectuals have railed against the powers that be. For much of Chinese history intellectuals, to the contrary, played an important part in reinforcing a respect for authority and hierarchy. Many German intellectuals were champions of the Prussian State and a Greater Germany. Others have sought to keep 'the life of the mind' separate from power and politics even when they have proven to be unavoidable. One thinks here of Archimedes, or of Marc Bloch writing his treatise on historical method whilst hiding in a cellar in France from the Gestapo. The *Philosophes* sought, ambitiously, to enlighten the despots of their time. A relatively small number of intellectuals have assumed political responsibilities of the highest order: Disraeli, Gladstone, Woodrow Wilson, Masaryk, Havel, Nehru, Lenin, Kissinger et.al. A greater number have sought to challenge the status quo,

⁶ On a much smaller scale it was the surplus generated by the slave-holding family which freed up the space for intellectual life in Ancient Greece.

setting truth against power. Others, Plato and Machiavelli among them, have had their ambitions thwarted.

There is then, clearly nothing new about these dilemmas and the problem of the balance between the life of the polis and the life of the mind preoccupied both Aristotle and Plato though, arguably, both ultimately placed the activity of contemplation above that of politics.⁷ This position received what has probably been its most famous defense in the twentieth century with the publication of Julian Benda's *La Trahison des Clercs* (The Betrayal of the Intellectuals). Benda, writing in the aftermath of World War One, wrote a bitter polemic against his fellow intellectuals who, in his eyes, had debased the intellectual calling in the unseemly scramble to offer their services to political and nationalistic ends. As a number of commentators have pointed out, Benda's thesis assumed that there was indeed 'a realm of universal values' - a universal commitment to the pursuit of truth - that had been betrayed.⁸ Benda was clearly running against the intellectual currents of the early twentieth century, most of which sought to undermine universality in all its guises. The collapse of the Second International had emphatically revealed as a sham the universal claims for the existence of a cosmopolitan brotherhood of working men. The eagerness of so many intellectuals to buttress their respective national chauvinisms threatened the intellectuals commitment to truth.

Max Weber sought a middle path between the debasement of intellectual life through its complete politicisation and an 'escapist' retreat to the ivory tower. Morgenthau, too, sought to combine the activism of political engagement with a commitment to keeping such activities separate from the classroom and, above all, maintaining a critical distance from authority. This

⁷ On this point see John G. Gunnell, *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation* (Winthrop Publishers, Cambridge, Mass, 1979) pp.139-140.

⁸ On this point and for further discussion of Benda see Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals*, pp.300-301; Szacki, 'Intellectuals between Politics and Culture', pp.230-236; Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (Vintage Books, New York, 1994) p.25.

is not to suggest that this duality was an unproblematic one and Morgenthau struggled for most of his life, as indeed did Weber, with the antinomies that arose from the multifarious commitments of intellectuals of their hue.

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